

Little darling

リトルダーリング

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June

Yaoi



Novel

little darling

Matsuji Kanzuki

Miyori finds himself stuck with the job of finding all the angels' children who have become lost in the human world. When Miyori stumbles on a child named Daishichi, he realizes that the child is actually the heir to the throne of the heavens. But as soon as they meet, Daishichi proposes to him Miyori wishes to someday become a real human man and has no intention of becoming someone's bride. But when he sees the stunningly handsome adult form that Daishichi takes when the sun goes down, Miyori's heart begins to quiver...

Part I: Little Darling

Chapter 1

On the roof of the Tokyo Government Offices building, a voice was heard. “Bite me! Why the hell do I have to go looking for some lost kid?” Kaie shouted into his cell phone.

“It’s in the job description. Look, pull this off and maybe you could stop dreaming about that promotion, okay? The kid’s a real blue blood. The Big Guy’s son.”

“Royalty? You mean the Celestial King? He’s got beaucoup brides up there! Exactly how far down the seniority list does this brat rate?”

“My, my, don’t we have the ears for bedroom gossip. And coming from somebody so piss-poor at pulling the wool over human eyes... If you’re so curious, Number Seven wife had him.”

“Well, he’s got a supernatural realms cell phone, doesn’t he? Give the little waif a ring!”

“He most likely does, except there’s some kind of jamming going on. It’s not that we have any doubts about who’s interfering with the signal, but we find ourselves unable to officially confirm the source. The Celestial realm has its internal politics to deal with.”

“Since this is *their* problem, then why not let *them* deal with it?”

“Have you forgotten how tight the Celestial King and the Demon King are? Just go find him. The gates to both Heaven and Hades are locked down for the

duration of the search, so there's no coming home in any case. Take good care of him."

"Huh. Sounds like I don't have a choice. Fine, I'll go grab the kid for you, just like some run-of-the-mill, nine-to-five working stiff."

"Seems the royal tyke went missing during a field trip of human skyscrapers. Probably lost his way on the roof of some building. The higher the building, the closer it is to the gate, you see."

"Remember, there's something in it for me if I find this kid! *Don't forget!*" Having delivered the only message he cared about, Kaie hung up and stuffed the phone into the pocket of his jeans.

"That your old buzzard of a boss?" Midori asked, in his distinctive Osaka accent. "What were you two fightin' about?"

"Yeah, that was Raven. He wants me to find a lost kid, and he wants it done yesterday."

"A lost kid? Well, don't that just stick in the craw." Midori tossed his glistening golden mane and guffawed.

"Yeah, it really sticks in the craw. That's why I'm asking for your help, Midori." As a stiff breeze ruffled his short, tawny hair, Kaie's request took on a demanding tone. Though hardly slight of frame, his smile was reputed to be unbelievably cute, even charming...though he did have quite a mouth on him.

"Sorry, but I'm running low on funds myself. It's time I hightailed it back to Osaka."

"I'm asking you as a friend. C'mon! Lend a hand! You're already crashing at my place instead of the

hotel. Sticking around a while longer won't kill you!"

"I'd consider it for a little roll in the hay."

"I'm not a girl so don't say crap like that!" Kaie yelled as Midori perched himself on the edge of the roof. "If you're not gonna help me, then I'll do it myself!"

With a soft *whomp*, he spread his wings: the lustrous, jet-black wings of a bat. "I'm gonna get my hands on that Celestial bigwig's kid, get myself made chief of the Hades Far East Division, and get myself one beautiful babe for a wife!"

"Hold your horses, Kaie. My bad, okay? I'll help you out."

Considering this all started with an emergency phone call from the Tokyo Administrative Bureau for the Demon Brood, that definitely meant Kinu at the Tokyo Administrative Celestial Bureau had gotten the call as well. Midori didn't think his angelic counterpart was gunning for a promotion, but did Kaie really think he could pull this off by himself? He could be quite the idiot at times.

Midori spread his wings and followed Kaie into the air.

The two individuals standing atop the Tokyo Government Offices building engaged in what might appear to be an imitation of a *manzai* stand-up comedy routine were "attendant spirits," or "daemons." Or in more familiar human terms, they were simply known as "demons."

In truth, the world was comprised of the Celestial, Human, and Demon realms. According to

the application of their respective powers, Heaven and Hades divvied up the human world into their various principalities. Exactly when these arrangements had been settled upon nobody knew for certain, but Heaven and Hades had come to deftly cradle the human world between their two opposing forces.

Once upon a time, the Kings of Heaven and Hades had gotten together for a little chit-chat...

“Hey, hey, Ma-chan.”

“What’s up, Ten-chan?”

“It looks like these humans are finally wizening up. So what do you say we create some jurisdictional boundaries around here?”

“Hmm. Good idea, Ten-chan.”

“How about having me and my angels and you and your devils do the supervising?”

“Sounds fine by me. Giving them nothing but do-gooders or nothing but evil-doers would mean the humans are bound to lean towards one side or the other. Balancing the incentives should ensure a prosperous posterity.”

“Sooner the better, then. Let’s get ’er done, Ma-chan.”

As disagreeable as such a situation might appear to the casual observer, for some two thousand years now, angels and their demon counterparts had been dispatched to every nation on the globe. Over time, things grew more complicated. Administrative areas in America eventually got divided up by state, in China by province, and in Japan by *ken*.

Incidentally, in the transcript above, “Ten-

chan” is the Celestial King (*Ten* being an abbreviation of “heaven”) and “Ma-chan” is the King of Hades (*Ma* being an abbreviation of “demon”). They can refer to each other using the diminutive “chan” instead of the more respectable “san” or “sama” because they were both kings.

They had always been buds and never missed an opportunity to gab on forever on the Heaven-Hades hotline.

Chapter 2

“Kaie! Midori! A good evening to you!” Tokyo Administrative Bureau Angel Kinu drew alongside them, flapping his white wings.

“Evening, Kinu. Thanks for putting in the overtime!”

“Indeed. My boss woke me up to send me on this manhunt. Couldn’t say no. Hardly got any sleep. I’d rather not, you know. Not good for my skin.” Kinu yawned and began braiding his beautiful golden hair into a long pony tail. “No matter how many cloaking barriers I erect, the light always leaks through. Humans with a good sixth sense can’t help but see me. It’s such a bother. Speaking of which, your hair’s so short, Kaie, and such a curious color. It must be nice to do without the fuss.”

Kinu beamed his charismatic smile. He took a rubber band from around his wrist and twisted it twice around his pony tail.

“Hey, I know your heart’s in the right place, but saying stuff like that just pisses me off!” Kaie yanked at a tuft of his hair (he got his from his mom) and glared at Kinu and Midori. “It’s not as if I got to *choose* this hair color because I *liked* it so much!”

Because Kinu’s parents were both angels, his hair was golden and his wings white. And of course he called Heaven home. Midori’s hair was also golden,

but in his case, because his father was a demon and his mother an angel, he possessed demon wings and called Hades home.

In short, the policy was that the child's affiliation—Heaven or Hades—was determined by the father's affiliation.

As for Kaie, both his father and mother were demons, but his mother was also a succubus. Under normal circumstances, he should have inherited his father's blood and turned out a magnificent demon. But thanks to a screw-up somewhere he got a strong dose of his mother's blood instead.

Consequently, the color of his hair reflected the striking characteristic of a lust demon: a light caramel color designed to deceive the human mind, also described as "tawny" or "beige" or "sandy."

But that wasn't all.

As a male he would have inherited his father's name and estate. But Kaie was born a hermaphrodite, and that meant everything would go to his little brother instead. The sex of a lust demon was not determined until three hundred years after his birth. Kaie was currently two hundred and eighty years old.

In human terms, anybody two hundred and eighty years old would have by then have turned into a ghost, a specter, or (under the proper conditions) a mummy. But because the concept of time was different in Heaven and Hades, Kaie was still considered a youngster.

Unlike the rapidly-aging humans, beings of the supernatural realms could choose an outward appearance

they believed best represented themselves and remained that way for the rest of their lives.

“It won’t be for another twenty years, but as my successor has already been decided upon, you should become female. Yes, with your cute looks, you’re certain to set any groom’s heart racing, don’t you agree?”

In order to prevent planting the seeds of any quarrels over succession down the road, in the event that two sons stood to inherit the estate of an established family, the specifics of inheritance were left to the father to decide.

“No way! I’ve grown up as a male until now. My sex may still be undecided but I’m definitely going to be a man!”

For this act of defiance, Kaie was tossed out of the house on his ear, and it was thanks to a good word from his mother that he was assigned to an administrative bureau on Earth. The thought brought a hopeful smile to his face—that his father might reconsider marrying him off as a woman if he turned in a good performance and moved up in the organization.

Twenty more years and he’d have to choose one way or the other, a decision that had a lot to do with his mental image of himself. Day and night Kaie told himself over and over: “I’m becoming a man! Not only that, I’m becoming one splendid specimen of a man!”

But no matter what anybody else said to cheer him up, it was all terribly discouraging.

“Don’t sweat it, Kaie. And don’t be saying such things. You’re a real pretty one. Look, after we find this lost kid, why don’t you get yourself hitched to Kinu here

and live the good life, rather than asking for some old promotion?"

"I'm not turning into a girl!" Kaie roared, his face turning red. "Don't think you can carry on so high and mighty just 'cause you got golden hair! Dumb-ass!"

"You know, I think being called a dumb-ass stings more than being called an idiot. C'mon, you know it's 'cause angels got such thick blood that my hair turned out this way, despite my dad being a demon."

Both Midori and Kinu shrugged and chuckled.

"Don't take me for a fool, neither!"

"Heaven forefend! So how about we divide and conquer, Kinu? People are pretty sure the kid was taking a gander at the big buildings in Tokyo when he went missing."

"My boss says he should be up around the rooftops too. I'll fly over to Tokyo Tower and look there. How about you, Midori?"

"I'll check out Kasumigaseki."

"You find anything, give me a call."

"Check."

His ponytail fluttering behind him, Kinu sailed into the smog-ridden night sky.

"Yo, whaddya say we get going, Kaie?"

"And who takes the credit?" Kaie asked, biting his lip and hanging his head.

Midori gently patted his shoulders. "You big idiot. Kinu and I don't need no stinkin' credit."

"It's fine if you do." Kaie flapped his wings several times and rose up on the wind. The wings holding

up his lanky body were big and powerful, but they were also very graceful. He was a fine adult specimen of the Demon Brood, but the way he glanced back uneasily over his shoulder made him seem more like a young fledgling whose wings were not fully formed.

He really was still a child, completely clueless about the nudge-nudge, wink-wink proposals between him and Kinu. Kaie was so spooked by his daddy's insistence on no hanky-panky before marriage that he wouldn't even mess around with a vampire from an established family who happened to have a thing for virgins.

Midori sighed and flew on in the wake of Kaie's wings.

Kasumigaseki at night twinkled like a cheaply-decorated Christmas tree.

“I don’t see him, Kaie.”

“Yeah. If we’re talking famous buildings, what’s next?” Kaie queried. His cell phone, stuffed into the back pocket of his jeans, trilled. “What?”

“It’s me, Kinu.”

“What’s up?”

“Ah, Tokyo Tower sure is romantic at night. I haven’t been here for a while. We should see it together some time, Kaie—”

Kaie made a face. “Quit BS’ing and get to the point!” he growled in a low voice.

“Yes, yes. Our lost child isn’t at Tokyo Tower. How about you two?”

“He’s not here either. What’s left?”

Midori called out, beating his wings, “Sunshine City!”

“You hear that, Kinu?”

“Sure. Good call. Let’s meet up on the roof of the Sunshine building.”

“Got it.”

Kaie hung up and looked over his shoulder at Midori. Midori laughed. “It’s kinda far but them’s the breaks!”

Chapter 3

“What’s so freaking fun about the human world? The nightlife is strictly off limits. I can’t drink. Sooner or later a cop or truant officer grabs you and gives you a bunch of bull about how he’s doing it for your own good. *That’s* why I skedaddled and ended up in this mess. My phone’s useless because of the jamming so I can’t get through to Heaven or Hades. To make things worse, the gates are closed—”

To the human eye, what appeared to be an elementary school student stood on the roof of the Sunshine 60 building in Ikebukuro, grumbling to himself.

“—and it’s freezing up here, no big surprise.” The boy sniffled and wiped his runny nose, folding the skinny arms poking out of the sleeves of his T-shirt. “Yeah, I should have brought somebody with me.”

“Hey! I got a kid at twelve o’clock!” a voice yelled out above his head. Less a yell than an angry roar.

Taken aback, the boy raised his head to see two big pairs of bat wings attached to the large frames of two beings from the supernatural realms. They floated there accompanied by a sound like distant helicopter blades.

The child stared at the demon with the hair like dried-out dandelions. *That’s a funny color for a demon*, he thought.

“Hey kid! You lost? You the son of the Celestial King’s Number Seven wife?”

Kaie alighted on the roof with a beat of his large wings and grinned at the child. The child raised his eyes. *Holy cow!* he thought to himself. *A smile that cute would turn the head of any man or woman.* The demon was on the tall side, but he’d heard that down in Hades girls came in all shapes and sizes.

The child smiled and grabbed the sleeve of Kaie’s T-shirt. At the same time, Kaie examined the kid from head to toe. “What’s this? An angel with black hair?” He seized a tuft of the kid’s hair in amazement.

“Ow! That hurts! Let go!”

“You serious? I’m not letting go, not with a weirdo like you on my hands. Look, Midori! Somebody’s got even weirder hair than me!

Midori could only gape at Kaie’s reckless behavior. Kinu, who had just arrived, turned a little green and broke out in a cold sweat.

“Huh? What? The kid’s okay, okay? I’ve got him under control. Tomorrow morning I’m taking him straight back to Heaven.”

“At this rate, I’ll end up demoted to a hardship post on Mercury.”

“I feel for you, Kinu,” Midori said, giving Kinu a sympathetic look.

“Who’s getting demoted? We found the kid and he’s safe, right?” Kaie gave the child’s hair a good yank and flashed a heroic smile.



“Um, Kaie. You *do* know—that kid—he ain’t just anybody’s kid.”

“Sure looks like one to me. Hardly comes up to my waist.”

“Isn’t the child of Number Seven wife of the Celestial King’s heir? Didn’t anybody clue you in about the genealogy?” Looking aghast, Kinu finally separated the child from Kaie’s grasp.

“You—gotta—be—*kidding*—me—”

“Angels don’t lie.”

“He’s right. I’ve heard Kinu tell a tall tale now and then but he’s no fibber.”

Midori was actually vouching for Kinu? Kaie felt a chill race up his spine. He grimaced and at looked hard at the kid.

Smoothing down his ruffled hair with his hands, the child fixed Kaie with a singular look and spoke in a low voice that belied his youthful face. “Who’s your superior? Whoever assigned this knucklehead to the Tokyo office is going to hear it from me. The two of you are going down big time.”

“I—I didn’t know you were some important angel and all. But since when does a guy get demoted for a rude remark or two? Hey, I’m talking to you!”

But Kaie’s bravado didn’t extend much further than the tone of his voice. The word “demoted” shook him to the core. He fluttered his big wings.

“Looks like you’re gonna end up getting married to me or Kinu—”

“Yes, indeed. You don’t want to walk that rocky road alone. You really need to take better care.”

“Shut the hell up! Midori! Kinu! I’m not becoming anybody’s bride! I’m gonna get this promotion and I’m gonna make a name for myself as a *man* in Hades!”

The child quietly listened to the three of them shouting at each other and smiled to himself. “There is only one way I know to avoid a demotion.”

For the second time, Kaie felt a shiver cascade through his body. He had a really bad feeling about this.

“Anyway, it’s cold here. Let’s go to *your* place. We’ll talk there.”

The child pointed at Kaie and unfolded his majestic white wings, a good three times the size of his body.

Chapter 4

The kid said his name was Daina.

Kaie had an ear to the ground in every realm but his grasp of the accompanying politics was laughably lacking. That's why it'd never occurred to him that the son of a seventh wife could be the heir.

“So you’re telling me that Number Seven of his seven wives has him wrapped around her little finger? And if he didn’t name her child heir, she’d bite his head off and beat him senseless with it?”

“Yeah, when it comes down to it, my mom’s got my dad whupped.”

With that, Daina glanced around the room. He seemed to find ordinary human lodgings a remarkable sight.

“Say, Daina-sama, all we’ve got here is some bargain-brand juice, but how about it?” Kinu had gone ahead and found a can of juice in the refrigerator. He placed it on the squat coffee table.

“Kinu! Go home and help yourself to your own juice! Tomorrow’s a work day!”

“I’m on flex-time, so it’s okay.”

“What’s this? When you’re posted to the human world, you have jobs?” Daina scowled at each of them in turn.

“Something like that.” Midori pulled a crumpled pack of cigarettes out of his back pocket, lit one up and

took a drag. “You’ve heard the expression, ‘When in Rome,’ right? ‘Cause we look like humans on the outside. It’s not right for guys our age to be hanging around all the time. People turn up their noses at layabouts.”

“I’m a businessman for a foreign banking firm. Midori runs a fried calamari franchise in Osaka. Kaie’s the super of this apartment building,” Kinu explained. “Everybody puts in a hard day’s work.”

“Subordinates engaging themselves in annoying activities? This is the first time I’ve heard of such things.”

“That’s because you’re just a kid. Whether Hades or the human world, the system has got its hooks into you.” Kaie raked his fingers through his hair and glared at Daina. “There’s no way you can understand the grief we have to put up with.”

“I don’t know about the grief part, but human beings sure are interesting,” Kinu admitted.

“Yeah. They tell me how delicious my food is and pay me for the privilege,” Midori added.

Kinu and Midori nodded back and forth, carrying on together as if Kaie wasn’t there.

Cocking an ear in their direction, Daina looked inquisitive. “Are human beings that interesting? I mean, living in places like this?” He shrugged and muttered, “My bathroom’s bigger than this place.”

“You’re comparing my place to your *bathroom*? Enough with the cheap shots!” Kaie rapped Daina on the head with his knuckles.

“You don’t seem to understand the position you’re in. Do you really want to get demoted that badly?”

How'd you feel about getting transferred to the remotest administrative outpost on the remotest planet in the universe?"

Kaie gulped. He definitely did not want to get posted to some nowheresville place like *that*. He still dreamed of climbing the supernatural corporate ladder as a *man*. Getting demoted would turn his future plans into rubbish. All he'd have to look forward to was being a bride.

"Dog, you just don't know when to stop. If you're gonna talk like that, you'd be better off keeping your mouth shut." As much as Midori sympathized with Kaie's plight, he still had to grin at him.

Kinu scolded him as well. "If you got transferred far away, then we wouldn't be able to have such good times together. It'd be a shame, Kaie." But his smiling face didn't exactly match his consoling tone.

"If you don't want to get demoted, then let me stay in this bathroom-sized apartment of yours for a while. Once I've enjoyed myself here, I'll head back to Heaven."

"No way!" Kaie's face contorted with fury. "Until I become a man among men, I am committed to living a disciplined life. By myself! Once I contact my boss, you're going straight home!"

His supernatural realms cell phone had fallen out of his pocket onto the hardwood floor. Kaie retrieved it and hit his boss's number on speed-dial. The phone rang twice on the other end.

"Hello. Raven here."

"It's me! Kaie from the Tokyo office! I've got

that lost kid in my custody!"

"You do? Great, great. I'll touch bases with Heaven and should be ready to see you in ten minutes. Where are you right now?"

"I'm at my place." Kaie had barely breathed a sigh of relief when Daina leapt up and snatched the cell phone out of his hand. "Hey! What the hell are you doing?"

"Kaie?" queried Raven. "What's going on? You run into some trouble—?"

"Don't worry. I'm Daina, son of Number Seven wife."

"Oh! Daina-sama!"

"I've grown fond of this place so I'm going to stay for a while. Tell Heaven about the change of plans. Got it?"

"I understand," said Raven. "I will relay your request to Heaven."

Daina hung up upon hearing the District Manager's reply.

"Well, I'd better call District Manager Dove, then." Kinu took his cell phone out of the pocket of his chinos and promptly dialed his boss.

"How did things come to this?" Kaie fell over and rolled around on the floor, head in his hands.

"Better than getting demoted, no? Chin up, Kaie."

"You know I hate kids!"

"Children are creatures that quickly turn into adults. Don't sweat it."

"I am sweating it!" Kaie shouted, slamming his

fist down on the table.

“Keep it down!” Kinu hissed, still on the phone.

Ignoring the furious tawny-haired demon for the time being, Midori turned to Daina, who was quietly drinking the bargain-brand juice. “Daina, you’re a boy, right?”

“Of course,” the boy said, shooting Midori an offended look.

“Look, Kaie. Daina’s a guy. Playing the gigolo would probably be asking too much, but there’s never anything wrong with being Cinderella and marrying into money.”

“Hey! Knock it off! I’m getting fed up with you and Kinu ganging up and trying to turn me into a woman! Enough already!”

“That’s ’cause Kinu and I like you so much. Still, if you could bring a little happiness to the life of an important person, we’d happily settle for being best men.”

Midori was putting on his “adult” face. Kinu finished his phone call and nodded in his direction. “Just like an angel. A love that asks nothing in return,” he said under his breath.

“I hate kids! And since I’m becoming a real man, I ain’t having any either! So stop comparing me to Cinderella!”

“You’re a girl? Hades sure does have butch women.”

Kaie whacked Daina up the side of his head.

“Ow! I’m definitely getting my dad to transfer

you out of here! Somewhere you can't go around hitting people on the head!"

"I'm not a girl!" Kaie glared at Daina, unfazed by his threats.

"Daina-sama, look here. Kaie got a full dose of his mother's blood, who happens to be a succubus. So he can go either way. In the next twenty years he's got to decide which."

As Kinu spoke, Daina pressed his small hands against Kaie's chest. He pursed his lips. "I don't feel any breasts."

"Hey, no touching without permission! Little twerp!"

"How can he be both without breasts?" The only androgynous beings Daina had ever seen (it sometimes occurred among angels as well) were all generously endowed.

"Um—" Midori snickered and whispered something in Daina's ear.

At the same time, Kaie blustered on at the top of his voice. "Of course I don't have breasts! I may be both, but my body is mostly male. I just happen to have an extra opening!"

"Huh. Hey, Kaie, you know what? You're interesting. You can be my Number One wife. You surely can't complain about that."

"Of course I can complain! Why the hell would I want to get married to a little pipsqueak like you? You just watch me become a big mover and shaker in Hades!"

Despite Kaie's fury, his friends were pretty

amused. “You did it, Kaie! A real live Cinderella! Straight to the top!” Midori wrapped his arms around Daina and held him up in front of Kaie, bobbing him up and down like a cute puppy.

Kinu clasped his hands together and beamed. “And as Kaie’s friends, we can hitch a free ride on his coattails, right? Go to Heaven and get jobs in management. Sit at nice desks, order subordinates around with our cell phones and computers all day...”

“No way! No way I’m becoming a nanny, or turning into Cinderella, *or* letting him live here!”

Dangling there in Midori’s arms, Daina laughed through his nose.

“You’re taking advantage of me,” Kaie growled, chewing his bottom lip.

“What do you want to do? Become my Number One wife? Or get demoted and spend the rest of your life going nowhere fast? You gotta choose one.”

Kaie was predisposed to hate the wife option if only because Daina found it so “interesting,” but he wasn’t too thrilled about getting demoted and working his fingers to the bone at a dead-end job either. If he went crawling to his parents, they would definitely marry him off to the next available son of an aristocratic family. But if he gave in to Daina, he faced the equally unappetizing prospect of doing everything the little runt told him to do.

Wait a minute! Yeah, the kid is just a kid! “Fine,” he said to Daina with an indulgent smile. “I give. I’ll be your Number One wife or whatever. But not right away. The deal is, we wait until you’re actually an adult.”

Based on Daina's appearance, he figured a good hundred years was going to pass before that happened. That was his logic behind the proposal.

For once Midori and Kinu had praise for their colleague, albeit not spoken aloud. *Good show, Kaie! You've actually thought this one through!*

However—

“What? It’s fine by me. You two are my witnesses. This butch hermaphrodite named Kaie said that he’d be my wife.”

Daina climbed down from Midori’s arms and grasped Kaie’s hand.

“I hate kids. Don’t hold my hand,” Kaie said, shaking his hand free and using it to pinch Daina’s cheek instead.

“Kaie, it’s getting late. I don’t want to pull an all-nighter here. I’ve got work tomorrow, so if anything happens give me a ring.”

Kinu stretched his body and unfolded his wings.

“Speaking of which, I’d better head back to Osaka. I’ve got to start getting my food stall rolled out for tomorrow. I can’t stay away from my territory forever.” Midori spread out his black bat wings.

“You’re both taking off?”

“I’m still here,” Daina reminded, “Tomorrow I want to you to take me to those Harajuku or Shibuya shopping districts I’ve heard about.”

“*This is why I can’t stand kids. They’re only curious about things that don’t mean anything.*”

“Kaie is a curious thing and I think he means something.”

“Damned little brat! Are you making fun of me? Are you?”

“That’s not the kind of *curious* I meant,” Daina muttered to himself, taking a deep breath. “What kind of idiot is his district manager anyway?”

Midori and Kinu opened the window wide, shooting sideways glances at Kaie and Daina’s Abbott and Costello routine.

“Later, Kaie.”

“Keep your dukes up, Kaie.

Turning their black and white backs to him, as if fanning toward him an ill wind that blew no good, they flew off into the night sky.

“Ah, they left.” Kaie stood there for a long time looking out the window.

“I’m tired, Kaie. Let’s share the bed.” Daina yawned and tugged at the sleeve of Kaie’s T-shirt.

“Sleep together? What are trying to say, kid?”

“My name is Daina. Not *kid*. And sleeping with her husband is the duty of the wife.”

“Just who do you think’s gonna be sharing a bed with you?”

“Don’t forget what you said.” Daina folded his arms across his chest and looked up at Kaie.

“I’m taking a bath,” Kaie grumbled in a low voice. He opened the door immediately off the *genkan* and opened the faucet to fill the tub. “I worked up a sweat searching for that stupid lost kid.” And what was with that “Don’t forget what you said” business? The sooner he put it all out of his mind the better. He’d show the royal nuisance a good time in the human world and

then send him packing, straight back to Heaven. What a pain in the ass children were.

He returned to his room still frowning. “Hey, Daina. Close the window. The air conditioner’s on. Electricity ain’t free.”

“Electricity? What’s that?” Daina sat with his chin in his hands and his elbows on the coffee table. His black hair swayed back and forth in the breeze.

“It’s the energy that turns on the lights and makes stuff move.”

“They don’t have solar globes here in the human world? How inconvenient.”

“That’s because humans can’t use power the same way that angels and demons can,” Kaie explained. “Since you’re the freeloader here, I got first dibs on the bath,” he said, disappearing into the bathroom.

With a very unchildlike expression, Daina grinned and flopped back on the floor. “When you see my true form, Kaie, it’s gonna throw you for a loop.”

Chapter 5

“Damn it all, I said I didn’t have any kid’s clothes. What the hell is he telling me to lay out a change of clothes for?”

In the small galley kitchen adjoining the living room, Kaie took a beer out of the refrigerator. With his left hand resting atop his hip, he downed it on the spot. What an awful night this had turned out to be, saddled with this weird kid. It was supposed to be *his* job to bedevil human lives, but instead it was all coming back on him.

Man, do I have all the luck, he thought, crumpling up the beer can.

“Kaie, a change of clothes—”

A man stood in front of him. He was about as tall as Kaie and pretty well built. His presence was striking enough that the offhand gesture of raking his damp hair back from his forehead made him all the more attractive.

Fascinated by the man’s appearance, his heart pounding and his cheeks flushing despite himself, Kaie stupidly asked, “And...who might you be?”

“I’m Daina.”

“No way.”

“It’s the truth. This is my true visage. Not a kid, you know?”

“No way!”

“Even if I was lying, what good would it do me?” Daina stood there with a bath towel wrapped around his waist and grinned.

“You’re...big.” Gazing at Daina at eye level, Kaie felt beads of cold sweat prickling up and took a step backwards. This guy was an adult, and that meant he was marry-able! And what a hell of a bod he had! Maybe it was time to for him rethink this Number One wife business—

Confronted with this completely unexpected situation, Kaie was nervous as he faced Daina. It didn’t occur to him that his racing pulse might be the evidence of love, and love at first sight to boot.

“Now I’m as big as you are. By the way, the same goes for down here—” Daina whipped off the towel, exposing the lower half of his body.

“I believe you! I don’t need to see it!”

“Considering all the trouble I’ve put you through, I thought I’d show you—”

“I appreciate the thought! The *thought!*” Kaie grimaced as he retrieved a fresh pair of underwear and a T-shirt from a small closet. He flung the garments at Daina.

“What’s with the bad attitude? Something this fine should have no problem creating children.”

The fineness of Daina’s whatever notwithstanding, Kaie stared at him truly mystified, the veins practically popping out of his forehead. “So you turn into an adult when you get into the bathtub?”

“I immerse myself in a hot tub of water for



about three minutes. Once I've relaxed body and mind, I assume this appearance. It's an annoying physical attribute I inherited from my mother. Otherwise," he explained in matter-of-fact sort of voice, "I only return to this form at night."

"So you're like a cup of instant noodles, eh? The way the noodles unravel themselves after a good soak?"

Just as Kaie was coming to terms with the discouraging conclusion that the spectacularly handsome Daina would be an adult only at night, the young royal impatiently shouted. "It wasn't exactly a long bath so I'm not going to stay stretched out for long. Hurry up and get into bed." He sat down on the bed and gestured for Kaie to join him.

"And who do you think is going to share a bed with a kid he met a few minutes ago?"

"You said you were going to be my wife, didn't you? Sleeping together is the natural thing to do."

"As in *literally* sleeping together?"

"Of course not. I've never done it with a hermaphrodite before. It's got me all excited." Daina smiled and beckoned to him with fluttering hands.

Kaie reddened in turn. "Are you really the heir of heaven? Aren't angels supposed to practice sobriety and self-control?"

"Don't be silly. Nobody practicing self-control marries seven wives and produces scads of children. Heaven is no different than Hades. The various factions battle each other. Somebody lays hands on somebody. Somebody gets marched to the altar with a knife at

their back. A Romeo and Juliet situation develops and bloodshed inevitably results. I don't suppose these are the kinds of angels you see in your dreams?"

Daina flopped back on the bed and chuckled to himself.

"I dream about the typical kind, like everybody else. Humans like books and stuff about angels. Angels are always portrayed as the good guys." Kaie sat on the bed and glanced down at Daina's striking countenance.

"Heaven is a bigger swamp of passions and desires than Earth or Hades."

"How's that?"

"Five of my half-brothers got killed before I was named heir. It was probably by my mom that did it. She's one strong-willed woman."

Kaie's eyes widened in surprise. He'd never heard this bit of gossip before. To begin with, no one in Hades would believe it was true. Everybody in Hades knew the limits of his own power, so nobody thought of disobeying the King or rebelling against his edicts.

It should be enough to eat and live well and cheerfully pull the wool over human eyes. That was the motto of Hades. To this day aristocrats and commoners alike had lived it to the fullest. It was rare for a demon to talk about his dreams of doing this and that, as Kaie did.

"Still, my physical constitution being what it is, I'm said to be unsuitable as heir to the throne. Number One wife and Number Two wife have been complaining their heads off." Daina yawned and nonchalantly added, "They may even send assassins after me."

“You’re talking about hit men?”

“Yeah. Destroying angels. I’ll worry about it if and when they actually show up. I’m too tired now.”

Tightly clasping Kaie’s hand in his own, he shut his eyes.

Hey, buster! Kaie wanted to yell at him. *Since when do you think it’s peachy making me your wife at such a dangerous time as this? Huh?*

But why should he spend an ounce of worry on Daina? He was nothing but a freeloader causing him nothing but grief! Yet Kaie couldn’t help but be charmed by Daina’s sleeping face. The face of an angel. *Demons* were supposed to have the monopoly on deception, Kaie thought dejectedly. And here he’d been taken by an *angel*. He heaved a deep sigh.

Chapter 6

Half-asleep, Kaie half-opened his eyes to find a black lump squirming around on his chest. “Hey—” he complained. “That tickles.” He laughed and threw his arms tightly around the black lump. *He sure does smell good though.*

Daina hugged Kaie back and his scent filled his lungs. “Ah—too tight—wha—?” Kaie’s eyes flew open. He looked down at his chest.

“Morning,” said the boy Daina, clinging to his torso.

“I thought I told you...I can’t stand kids! Git *off* me—!”

With a shriek, the helpless Daina flew through the air and crashed to the floor.

“Y-you caught me off guard,” Kaie stammered.

“But we were doing fine together when we were asleep. If you’re going to be that cold to me, I might be forced to take advantage of you.” Daina glared at Kaie, his oversized T-shirt and underpants falling off him.

“And who exactly is gonna be taken advantage of by a kid who’s not even five feet tall?”

“I can do it at night. At night I’m the same size as you.”

“Ah—” Recalling the “adult-sized” Daina from the night before, Kaie gulped and swallowed his retort.

“Since I’m stuck with this body during the

daytime, I couldn't even if I wanted to. So I'll just have to wait until night. At any rate, gimme my clothes."

His officious tone seemed almost incompatible with his angelic, sleeping countenance. Kaie lay on the bed like a limp noodle. *Oh great.* Now he had to babysit this little kid. On the other hand, if he refused, he'd be getting the boot from the King of Hades himself—

"Hey, are you deaf? I don't have anything to wear."

"Wear what you were wearing last night! Why the hell would I have children's clothes in my closet?" Kaie buried his face in his pillow and roared in frustration.

"Then let's go to that Harajuku place or that Shibuya place and buy some."

"I'm not going to a place like that. It's gonna be packed to the gills."

"I wanna go. Take me there!"

Kaie tried ignoring him at first, but Daina pitched such a fit that eventually he relented.

Chapter 7

“Oh, it fits you perfectly.”

“Are you a professional model?”

“Your little brother is *such* a cutie pie. Here, why don’t you try on this outfit? I’m sure you’ll love it.”

In the children’s fashion boutique of a certain famous Shibuya department store, Daina was the center of attention. It made no sense to the kid-hating Kaie, but Daina had won over the haughty and condescending sales clerks. In fact, they couldn’t keep their hands off him.

As far as Kaie was concerned, anything that fit was fine by him. Yet a dumbfounding array of outfits continued to pile up on the counter.

“Hey, hey, look at me, big brother.”

“Huh—”

Daina was completely decked out and totally fashion-coordinated. Yet he still took every opportunity to call Kaie “big brother,” cling to his side, and yank on his sleeves. *Like I told him, I hate kids!* But Kaie couldn’t exactly biff him one here. So he put up with it the best he could.

“It looks great on you,” Kaie said, pulling a face.

“Then shall I ring this one up as well?” asked the clerk, looking up from the register with a big smile on her face.

“Sure, go ahead,” Kaie replied weakly, giving Daina’s cheek a firm pinch.

“Ouch!” Daina rubbed his left cheek, taking a seat on the railing.

“Figures. You choose a time and place when I can’t get back at you to hang all over me. Kids are such a pain in the ass. I’m not a girl, I keep telling you!”

After calling him every name in the book, Kaie handed Daina an ice cream cone. They’d arrived in Harajuku after making the fifteen minute walk from Shinjuku along Meiji-doori Avenue. And right now, they were taking a break, sitting on the Omotesan-dou Street guardrail, watching the people go by.

“Sure is hot today.”

Daina had on a short-sleeved linen shirt, chino Bermuda shorts and suspenders, and deck shoes. He looked like a child model.

“Summer is always hot. Ah, my ice cream’s melting—”

The odd combination of a smartly-dressed, otherworldly-looking boy (he was an angel, so of course he was “otherworldly”), and an ordinary-looking young man with strangely colored hair wearing a nondescript T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers did not fail to catch the attention of passers-by.

“Kaie, give me your handkerchief. My ice cream’s melting.”

“Idiot! Those are brand-new clothes!” Kaie took his handkerchief from the pocket of his jeans and handed it to Daina, whose hands were already sticky with ice cream. “Hurry up and eat it!”

“It’s strange. I’ve never tasted it before.”

“I can buy you ice cream anytime. Good grief. Give me my handkerchief back.”

Kaie sat down in front of Daina, took the handkerchief from him, and wiped off his face and hands.

“As I thought. Only a Number One wife could relish such love upon her husband.” Looking very pleased with himself, Daina smiled at Kaie.

“If I’m supposed to be Number One, I suppose that means there’s gonna be a Number Two and a Number Three.”

“I’m against polygamy, so Kaie will be my Number One and only.”

Daina spoke in a serious tone of voice that Kaie had to pause and reconsider his opinion of him. *Despite being a kid, he’s got a good head on him. What you’d expect from the heir.*

“Let’s call it a day. We’ve seen Shinjuku and Harajuku. Time to go home.” Kaie balled up the crumpled handkerchief and stuffed it in the pocket of his jeans.

“I don’t want to. We have seen Takeshita-doori yet.”

“Look, I’m the super of my building, alright? I can’t be away from the place all day.”

“There was this bit on *Celestial Walkabouts* about the *Terrestrial Restaurant Hopping Guide*—”

“Sorry, but the clock’s run out on you getting your way today.”

“Tonight, then, let’s go to Roppongi.”

“Give me a freaking break!”

As he headed to the subway, Kaie picked up Daina with one arm and the shopping bags with the other. *Man, I hate it when humans stare at me!* It didn’t occur to him that hauling Daina along under his arm was attracting all the attention.

Chapter 8

The sun began to set several hours later.

This human sun is out of sync, Daina thought, looking enviously at the world outside the window. In Heaven and Hades the sun rose exactly when it was ordered to. *Which reminds me, I should probably let my dad know that I've chosen my Number One wife.*

He threw himself fitfully on the floor of the room (the very one he'd dissesed as no bigger than his bathroom) and thought about how to get in touch with his father. The jamming signal probably wasn't blocking communication anymore, but there was no way for him to know what other eavesdropping might be going on.

He tossed and turned. He was doing all this worrying on his own. Kaie had gone to deliver leaflets about an upcoming neighborhood association meeting to the manager of a nearby apartment complex.

Speaking of which, Kaie had gotten corralled by one of his tenants when they'd arrived back at the building. "Hey, cute kid you have there. Related to you? Visiting for a while?"

"Ah—um—he's my brother. He's been staying with relatives, but being a kid and all, he got lonely and came to stay with me for a while."

"That's right, you did mention losing your parents. So young and yet going through such trials. If there's ever anything weighing on your mind, don't

hesitate to call me.”

“Yes. Thank you very much for the offer.”

These kinds of conversations apparently went on between Kaie and his tenants all the time. Kaie had really adapted to the human realm. *Even so, what's the deal with making me his little brother?* Was there some mistake about who was the husband here? If he kept on jerking him around like this, Daina was going to have a word with Kaie's superior and get him demoted.

The sun set a little while later, and the time had finally arrived when he could turn back into an adult. Daina chuckled meaningfully to himself.

“Ah, there you are, Daina-sama.”

Somebody was pressed up against the window, grinning at him. And not just anybody. A man in a suit with golden hair and a big pair of white wings attached to his back. Daina was at a loss for words. He stared back at the smiling man, a look of disgust rising to his face. But then he looked into the man's eyes and his expression hardened.

The man's eyes were blood-red, the signature color of an assassin. A destroying angel. “Why don't you invite me in, Daina-sama?” said the angel, sliding open the window and slipping into the room.

“If I asked, would you tell me who sent you?”

“Tell you? It's all the same to me. I was commissioned by Number Two wife.”

“Huh. Loose lips sink ships, you know.”

“I don't see you spilling the beans once you're dead, so I figure we might as well talk up a storm.”

He sounded like the heavy in a B-grade crime

drama, but knowing that it was a destroying angel's job to get things done fast and get them done right, Daina only nodded and spoke with a touch of admiration. "I see."

"You even get to choose the manner of your death. It's part of the promotional campaign were doing right now. You can get stabbed to death, poisoned to death, or burned to death. So what's your flavor?" The destroying angel settled down on his haunches, looking Daina in the eyes with a grin.

They all sounded pretty painful. "None of the above."

"There you go, only thinking of yourself. I already got paid in advance, don't you see."

"I'm a married man. I can't make my wife a widow."

"Congratulations. Tell you what, how about I kill the both of you at the same time? The second one's on the house. We'll call it part of our special promotional campaign."

Wondering what in the world the "special promotional campaign" was, Daina shook his head.

"Well don't this beat all."

If Daina's refusal to play along was really going to cause him so much consternation, he should have whacked him first and asked questions later. This destroying angel wasn't exactly the brightest bulb in the bunch.

At this moment, Kaie returned home, unknowingly walking in on a rather casual scene of an impending assassination. "I'm home," he called out.

“The building manager next door gave me some waffles. That’s what I like about human beings. They’re always giving stuff away for no particular reason—”

He stopped in front of what he took to be a visiting angel, his eyes opening wide. “What bureau are you from? I thought I knew all the angels at the Tokyo office. Are you from abroad?”

“You idiot!” Daina screamed at him. “Pull your head out! Look at him!”

Still holding the bag of waffles, Kaie took in the paradoxical sight of an angel with blood-red eyes and wings emerging from the back of a suit coat. “No way! I’ve never seen a destroying angel before. And he’s wearing a suit!”

“I’m pleased to have made such an impression. And you would be Count Kagetsuyu’s daughter?”

“Hey, who’s calling me a daughter? My father was the one who took the liberty of listing that sex on my birth record! I’m very much a man!” *At least, that’s how I intend to turn out!*

The destroying angel bowed his head in the face of Kaie’s fury. “I’m sorry.”

“He’s my wife. Pretty interesting, huh?”

“What the hell is so *interesting* about it? You said I’d get demoted if I didn’t agree to be your wife. You twisted my arm! You’ve got more demon in you than I’ve got in me!”

“Whether I do or not, I’m still an angel.”

“That kind of cockiness is exactly what I can’t stand about you!”

“You’ll get used to it. Once we’ve set up house

in Heaven, I'll give you as pampered a life as any greenhouse orchid."

"I'm not a girl and I don't need to be treated like some dumb flower!"

"Perhaps you don't look like it now, but you've got a bit of woman inside you, don't you? You could bear children once we put our minds to it?"

"I'm not bearing anything!" Kaie threw down the waffles, grabbed Daina in a headlock and tossed him around like a rag doll.

"Um—"

"What do you want?!" Kaie turned on the destroying angel, his face apoplectic with rage.

"Y-you're really scary, Kaie-san."

"For an angel from a Celestial assassination squad, why are you acting so stupid?!"

"B-because destroying angels can't go around killing people looking all scary and everything."

"Killing people with a smile is a whole lot scarier!"

The frightened destroying angel watched as Kaie picked up Daina and threw him onto the bed, doing a good version of a "brainbuster" move straight out of professional wrestling.

"I was always told that it's wrong to frighten the target before I kill them." The destroying angel stared at Kaie, an almost tearful expression on his face.

"And who in the hell did you come here to kill?!"

Overwhelmed by the sheer, obstinate weight of Kaie's thick-headedness, the destroying angel sank to

the floor in amazement. Daina took the opportunity to dive under the covers.

“Eh? I speaking Greek to you? Hey, Daina!”

“I told you yesterday, remember? Things might not be so safe for me around here.”

“You’re saying this destroying angel came here to kill you?”

“So it would seem.”

The destroying angel, still cowering, peered up at Kaie.

“Listen, there’s no killing anybody—*angels* included—in my apartment! Cleaning up afterwards would be a nightmare!”

“*That’s* not the problem, idiot,” Daina grumbled. He sat cross-legged on the bed, looking rather cute as he did so.

“But I would very much like to fulfill my professional duties as soon as possible, and seeing as I’ve got a number of pressing engagements to attend to—”

“I told you, forget it! These damned angels are a *completely* unreasonable bunch. It’d set my career back *decades!*”

Kaie had unwittingly struck a tender chord in the destroying angel. “I know what you mean. My classmates are all in middle management working comfy desk jobs while I’m stuck pounding the pavement with the rest of the greenhorns,” the destroying angel explained, before actually breaking down and starting to cry.

Unlike human beings, nobody in the supernatural realms “looked their age.” Nevertheless, being stuck

doing the same grunt work alongside coworkers several centuries one's junior was a hard pill to swallow. Hard on the spirit.

Kaie could empathize. "I see. That's the way it is. You're a working stiff just like me. Man, it's tough. I *totally* understand what it feels like. Some weirdo tells me I gotta be his wife. Threatens to get me demoted. Makes me sleep with him—"

It wasn't the same thing at all, but misery loves company and Kaie knew his own problems better than anything.

"Hey, Mr. Destroying Angel."

"W-what, Daina-sama?"

"What are you getting paid for this job?" Daina asked, stretching out his legs and plopping down on the floor next to the comely, but currently runny-nosed angel.

"Um—well—" He took a PDA from his inside suit coat pocket, pressed several keys, and turned the screen to Daina.

"Huh. In that case, I'll hire you. For this much." Daina extended his index finger and hit a key, adding a zero to the end of the number. He grinned.

"But even so—"

"I'll put in a good word with my dad and get you a promotion. So listen to what I have to say."

"Say, what kind of double-dealer are you, Daina? Don't go around shoving your daddy's name in people's faces. You're acting like a school bully!"

Ignoring Kaie's protest, Daina awaited the destroying angel's answer.

“I understand. Does this mean you’ll also cover any breach of contract penalties?”

“Ah.” Daina shrugged and gave a small smile. “I think our deal would, in due course, invalidate the breach of contract penalties as well.”

Both Kaie and the destroying angel tilted their heads in puzzlement.

“And who is it you wish me to eliminate, Daina-sama?”

“The whole lot. Wives Number One through Six. The sooner the better. That’s sure to change the subject of conversation around Heaven.”

“I understand.”

The destroying angel bowed to Daina and Kaie, departing through the same window he’d entered through. No tear-stained cheeks, no runny nose. He left in a completely refreshed mood.

“That’s a pretty damned brazen operator, even with all our cloaking devices in place! And speaking of which—Daina! Even out of some screwed up sense of duty... your own mothers? What kind of person offs his own relatives?” Kaie grabbed Daina by the hair and scowled at him fiercely.

“To start with, I’m an angel, not a person. Maybe it’s just my own opinion, but my father has lousy taste in women. All it takes is a pretty face. This type of thing is bound to happen again, so it’s probably better to strike first and take them out in one fell swoop. In any event, they’ll probably reincarnate themselves soon enough, so any discomfort in the short term should prove more than tolerable.”

Daina freed his hair from Kaie's grasp and with a small shrug turned his gaze out the darkened window.

"H-hey! I was talking to you!" Kaie said, waving his now empty hands as if he didn't know what to do with them. He plopped himself down in front of Daina.

"I was the one who got bullied," Daina said.

"You're who?"

"What you said before. When I was in school, I was always the one getting picked on," Daina mumbled under his breath, averting his eyes

In both Heaven and Hades, children, like those of the human realm, had to receive an elementary and secondary education. Though in the case of the supernatural realms, their education involved learning the proper use of their powers, making a living in the human realm, understanding the laws of the Three Realms, things like that.

It wasn't exactly the same as the treatment Daina described, but Kaie couldn't help recalling what happened to him after school. Guys used to rough him up behind the gymnasium, dress him up in girl's clothes, crap like that.

"Considering my physical constraints and my black hair, even if I was the offspring of the Celestial King, nobody wanted to be my friend. Well, actually, no. Girls were different."

A cute-looking kid by day, a fine-looking man by night—well, it was fairly self-explanatory. Whether angels or demons or humans, girls loved pretty things.

"As soon as I graduated and was officially

recognized as my father's heir, everybody around me did a one-eighty and started fawning all over me."

Kaie drew his brows together as he listened to Daina's tale. Heaven struck him as more like Hades than Hades was. The dictates of blood and social standing were strictly adhered to in Hades as well, but his teachers always said that *humans* were the ones they were supposed to be tormenting, not each other. Though with the counterbalancing of power between demons and angels always in mind, their abuse of humans always took the form of carrot and stick.

Heaven was a lot like the typical human government.

"So I got pissed off and started leveraging my father's good name for all it was worth."

"Just what you'd expect from a bratty kid," said Kaie, giving Daina a noogie.

"Enough with calling me a kid, okay? You were born a few decades before me, that's all."

"Still makes you my junior. In Hades, even a demon who's a few seconds older than you is your superior, and you gotta pay respect."

Considered in this light, the way Kaie spoke to and behaved around Midori—six months his senior—was fairly rude. But it was probably because he'd taken a shine to Kaie that Midori cut him a lot of slack.

"So that's why you're always trying to rip me a new one? Just 'cause I'm younger than you?" Daina glared reproachfully at Kaie and sighed deeply.

"No, that's not what—" Kaie paused, swallowing the rest of the sentence with difficulty.

“My parents never hit me, not even when they got mad at me. I’ve put up a cool front until now, but you gave me a big shock, you know? Nobody’s whaled on me like that since my school days—”

Daina’s countenance grew darker and darker. If phrased in the words of the human literary gothic genre, he’d be described as “a striking young man harboring a hidden sorrow.”

“You’re telling me that *I’m* the first person who ever hit you? You gotta be kidding me. But you said you were picked on in school—”

“This is what I get for hating kids. No idea how to connect with them. I end up pounding on him despite myself. It’s nothing personal. Geez, this is awkward,” Kaie muttered to himself, trying to rationalize the guilty feelings welling up in his heart.

“Idiot. Me being half-kid, half-man doesn’t affect my powers at all. Nobody would dare lay a hand on me. Instead, they’d ignore me, hide my books, put thumbtacks in my shoes and dried-up frogs in my shoe locker—” He grinned, a fearsome expression coming to his face. “Now they’re all in dead-end jobs, working their fingers to the bone.”

“You’d be better off as a demon.”

“I’ve thought so too recently. My mother’s blood proved thick. My hair is definitely black.”

Daina’s mother was the youngest daughter of the King of Hades.

Kaie nodded emphatically. The part about his mother’s blood being thick went double for him and his lot in life. Under normal circumstances, it should’ve

been *his* hair that was black.

“You know, you keep saying how *interesting* I am, but don’t you think we’re pretty much two peas in a pod?”

“I guess so. Well, Number One wife, they say you should marry someone similar to yourself.” Daina’s face suddenly brightened. He smiled broadly and threw his arms around Kaie’s waist.

“What the hell—! There you go again, acting like some clingy little kid!”

“Give me three minutes and I’ll hold you as a full-fledged adult.” With that, Daina got up and headed for the bathroom.

“You give me twenty years and I’ll be a full-fledged man! Living the good life with a big-time career, a bunch of commendations on the wall, and a babe from some old-money family for a wife!”

“And if you don’t become this full-fledged man you speak of? Since when do demons aspire to live the good life?” Daina returned Kaie’s red-faced, enraged gaze with a surprised look of his own.

At the root of all this business about “being a man” and whatnot was the only person who truly understood Kaie: his mother, the succubus. “Your father will come around eventually, Kaie. In the meantime, work hard, do the male sex proud, and you’ll become the heir of the Kagetsuyu Clan.”

Kaie had been brought up hearing those words. Though sometimes his mother would tell him that she didn’t think it mattered. “Whether you become a girl or a boy, either is all right by me. As long as you’re happy.

I wonder who your soul mate will turn out to be—” She murmured such romantic thoughts while gazing at the Moon rising over Hades.

Yeah, like this kid with the presto-change-o body is my soul mate? No matter what perspective he took, no matter how he dissected the problem, he didn’t need any more confirmation than what he had right now. Make no mistake! He was a man! The kind of man grown men applauded and boys wanted to be when they grew up.

But for whatever reason, the thought quite unexpectedly sprang into his mind that even if he *was* a man, this guy would still call him his “wife.”

“I have to believe that if you hook up with an angel like me, we’re destined to enjoy a splendid life together. So let’s get it on.” Not comprehending Kaie’s heart at all, a belligerent smile rose to Daina’s lips.

“You some kind of pervert angel, Daina? Wanting to do the nasty with a guy and all—?” But what Kaie felt in his heart betrayed the words on his tongue.

“If that’s what it means to be a pervert, then that’s what I am. But doesn’t it all come down to there being one hole down there or two?”

“You can’t divide things up so easily like that! Hey, don’t be so damned flippant about it! Stupid jerk!”

“We can debate the offensiveness of my observations later. Don’t get so worked up about it,” he said, with all the temperament of a laid-back monarch—or so Kaie thought, observing him.

“Well, I gotta go outside and do my job. You hold down the fort.”

“What about dinner? When can we go to this Roppongi place?”

“Hold your britches. I’ll be back soon. I’m just taking a look around,” Kaie replied, slowly spreading his wings. He didn’t want to complicate his life further with any more conversation. “If any humans come knocking, tell them your big brother went shopping and won’t be home until late. Got that?”

Daina nodded, but in his heart he secretly vowed to say, “My wife went shopping and won’t be home until late.”

Kaie cloaked himself in the force field that made himself invisible to human eyes and snapped open his wings. The large bat wings trembled slightly.

They’re beautiful, thought Daina, shining so lustrosely.

“The air conditioner’s running, so close the window after I leave,” Kaie said, opening the window all the way and launching himself into the night sky.

He thinks I want him for my wife simply because he’s “interesting.” But that was not the case. Besides, Daina was dead set against polygamy. He really had no intention of playing the field.

Daina shut the window firmly, his shoulders slumping a bit. He’d been too abashed to put into words any fond wishes of farewell.

Incidentally, the adult Daina who set off for Roppongi later than night was quite the talk of the town. People nowadays, Japanese and foreigners alike, naturally register only what they can visually comprehend.

Like iron filings orientating themselves to the pole of a magnet, girls of all types aligned themselves around Daina as he downed drinks in the clubs, each clinging to him and whispering hot nothings in his ear. There were a few gay men among them.

Kaie accompanied the partying Daina wearing a sullen expression on his face the entire time. For all his big talk about making Kaie his wife, he sure had no qualms about getting up close and friendly with the girls.

The simple fact of the matter was that Kaie was jealous.

Chapter 9

“Daina-chan! Come over here! Your aunties bought you some sweets!”

A passel of their nosier and more matronly neighbors had just returned from shopping. They beckoned to Daina, who was sweeping the lobby of the building.

Having conversations with humans was a pain in the ass. “Listen, Daina,” Kaie lectured him earlier with a perfectly straight face. “The scariest, pushiest creatures on the planet are the *o-ba-san*. It means *auntie*, but they’re any bunch of women with too much time on their hands. Once a pack of ‘em has got you surrounded, give it up already. Resistance is futile.”

Kaie had his hands full being the super and Daina didn’t want to bother him, so he obediently trotted over to the gaggle of human women.

“Oh you’re so cute, Daina-chan. You really can’t attend school because of your weak constitution? That’s what the super said.”

“Is it even okay for you to be cleaning up by yourself?”

“Here are some Neuhaus candies for you. Go ahead. Eat up!”

“Where in the world did you get your hands on such expensive chocolate?”

“Oh, listen to yourself! You can’t go stuffing

children full of those cheap, artificial sweets!"

"I'm not saying it's good just because it's expensive! Daina-chan, why don't you and the super share this bread together? It's from the Imperial Hotel bakery!"

"Heavens to Betsy! Aren't we putting on the Ritz! How in the world do you balance the books on your husband's salary?"

"And you're sending your three kids to cram school! Where does the money come from?"

The sparks flew and the words shot back and forth as the pack of aunties inquisitorially picked away the contents of their respective purses. For a conversation that started with giving him stuff, Daina hadn't the foggiest idea how it got off on this tangent. Grasping the bag of chocolates and the bread in his hands, Daina scowled. Attempting to quell the verbal spat, he cleared his throat.

"What's this! Daina-chan! Are you catching a cold?"

"Colds you catch during the summer are the worst!"

"With your weak constitution, you should be resting in your apartment. The residents association will appoint a committee to find people to cover for you."

"Of course we will. Such an unfortunate boy as beautiful as you—it's like straight out of tragic love story!"

"I pray it's not pneumonia."

"If only my boy was as handsome as you!"

The aunties cawed together like a flock of

crows, slapping each other on the back as if this was all in a day's work.

“Nothing like them anywhere—” Daina said to himself, eyeing the aunties as they headed off to the elevators.

Chapter 10

Kaie was sitting at the coffee table compiling a list of Tokyo's bad guys on his notebook computer when his supernatural realms cell phone trilled out a cute tone.

“Hello, Kaie here.”

“*Yo, it's me. How's it hanging, Kaie?*”

“Wassup, Midori?”

“*Aw, man, Kaie. Can you try being a bit more polite to your superiors?*”

“And? What'cha calling for?”

“*I was thinking of dropping by tonight. Wanted to make sure you weren't out. Something heavy's coming down.*”

“Fine by me. How heavy?”

“*Too heavy to tell you over the phone. Oh yeah, that kid Daina needs to be there too. Let him know, okay? Bye now.*”

Beep. The Osaka demon's line went dead. Midori said only what he needed to say and hung up.

“W-what was *that* all about, Midori?” Kaie wondered, drawing his brows together. A minute later, the phone rang again. Right in the middle of work! Now what?

“Hello, Kaie here.

“*How are you? It's Kinu.*”

“Say, aren't you in the middle of doing your

human businessman stuff?"

"I've been out of the office all day, so I came straight home. Speaking of which, one of my human clients is a bit too nice for his own good. I thought you might want to take him down a couple of notches."

"Fine by me. And I've got a ne'er-do-well on my hands who could use a little sweetening up. If you wouldn't mind—"

"Got it. Sorry, that wasn't the reason for my call. I'm coming over to your place tonight so I wanted to make sure you weren't out on patrol. Keep Daina-sama within shouting distance as well. Got a big job for you."

"A big job?" Midori had said pretty much the same thing. Kaie was getting a really bad feeling about this.

"I can't get into it over the phone. Bye bye."

Boop. The Tokyo angel's line went dead. He said what he needed to say and hung up, too.

A big deal that involved both him and Daina? Kaie folded his arms and stared at the screen of his notebook computer, wearing the same fierce expression that had made the destroying angel practically weep with fear.

Damn—I can't even begin to imagine what's going on! He heaved a deep sigh.

"I've finished cleaning the lobby," Daina piped up suddenly. He walked into the apartment bearing the bags of treats.

"Oh, thanks. What's with the bags?"

"A bunch of those over-the-hill human ladies

gave them to me.”

“You mean the aunties?” A fearful look flashed across Kaie’s face.

Daina nodded. “I’m such a pitiful sight, they can’t stop giving me all this crap.”

This wasn’t the first time he’d hauled in a stash from his human benefactors. “Since it won’t go bad”—canned food. “Since it looked a perfect fit for you”—children’s clothing. “Since you need something for an afternoon stack”—fine confections, individually boxed.

Apparently, their conclusion was that Daina’s “poor constitution” resulted from Kaie not feeding him properly.

“Since when did you decide that I was some sickly, unfortunate foundling? Explain yourself.” Daina deposited the spoils on the kitchen counter next to the sink and sat down next to Kaie.

“Because it’d raise eyebrows if somebody who looks like an elementary school student was seen hanging around playing hooky all day. When humans run into somebody who’s even a bit different than themselves, they have this annoying habit of wanting to make the problem go away.” Kaie powered down his notebook computer and gave Daina a pat on the head.

“So, am I inconveniencing you?”

“Nothing in particular springs to mind.” *When it comes to inconvenience, his mere existence is enough!*

“You sound like some old man’s old spouse.”

“Like some old man’s old house?” echoed Kaie.

“Forget it,” said Daina. As he gave Kaie an exasperated look, he couldn’t help but wonder. *What kind of children is this idiot wife of mine going to produce? More idiots?* Well, at least according to one human proverb, the dumber the child the more endearing he becomes. With these thoughts on his mind, he snuggled up to Kaie.

Kaie exploded. “Daina! How many times do I have to tell you? I hate kids!” Kaie picked up the cuddly Daina and with an *umph!* tossed him onto the bed. “If you want to get so clingy, then wait until the sun goes down and pop yourself into the bath for three minutes. We can do it then!”

Dead silence. Quiet enough that Daina could hear a drop of water falling from the spout in the bathroom.

Several moments later Kaie finally realized what he really said. *The adult Daina can do whatever he wants with me.* He blushed all the way up his ears.

Alternately, the brazen confession left Daina totally excited. *What’s this I hear, Kaie? Do you really love me after all?*

“Hey, Daina,” Kaie said hesitantly, his face lobster-red. “Wipe that evil smile off your mug.”

If there was ever a time to pry a conversation out of Kaie, it was now. Daina girded up his loins. “Why do you hate kids so much?” He wanted to know everything about him. This was a matter of love.

Kaie made a face like he’d taken a bite out of a lemon and didn’t respond.

“If you don’t want to say, that’s fine too.”

“I had tons of brothers and sisters. And to make matters worse, my parents were always behaving like a pair of newlyweds, abandoning us kids and taking off by themselves.”

“Ah,” responded Daina.

Kiae continued on in a subdued voice. “Dumping a bunch of brats in my lap, all still in their diapers, and skipping out of town for months at a time—unbelievable, huh?”

“Ah,” he said again.

“Feeding ‘em, changing their diapers, pacifying ‘em, cleaning up after ‘em! I never got to go out and play and do the things *I* wanted to! Put up with crap like that for months on end and anybody would develop a loathing for the little twerps!”

He’d been in high school at the time, and when remembering those days, he still found himself pouting.

And yet. *And yet* Daina was overjoyed. *So that’s the reason?* Then everything was all right. He didn’t have diapers that needed changing. He didn’t need to be fed baby food. Despite his child-like appearance, he was definitely much lower maintenance. *I only want to sleep together once in a while—*

“Playing with them when they got bored, making them dinner when they got hungry—I was their brother, not their nanny! It was the responsibility of the servants to watch after them, but supposedly, they were all so “fond” of me that the servants dumped their responsibilities on me! And you know who let them? My mom!”

Kiae grabbed Daina by the hair, drew him

closer, and poured out all the discontent he'd stored up until now. Thinking that he couldn't let this opportunity slip by, Daina pressed his lips against Kaie's.

Kaie started and scuttled backwards like a crayfish, his face again flushing red, violently wiping his mouth against the back of his hand.

“Well, that’s not a very flattering reaction.”

“*Son of a bitch!* Of course I was surprised, getting kissed like that!” Kaie glared at him. “Besides, the mood was hardly right, and you being in child form—”

“I understand.”

With a sour look, Daina got to his feet and marched off to the bathroom. He'd gotten the hang of using the bathtub water heater. He'd run the hot water, take a three-minute dip, and the adult Daina would be raring to go.

“W-wait!”

“Now what?” Daina locked the bathroom door from the inside.

I'm going to have a lot of explaining to do if Daina comes out of there an adult! Kaie groaned to himself, collapsing on the floor. While he found the child Daina an annoyance, the adult Daina aroused in him a hot rush of emotion. Every time he looked into the eyes of that Daina, his heart pounded like a drum. There was nothing endearing about a madly racing pulse.

If this terrible throbbing keeps up I'm going to drop dead from a heart attack. And he'd never become a man among men. With Daina stuck at his side, he was destined to end up a godforsaken woman. He was

standing at the edge of the precipice, but Kaie couldn't stop thinking about the black-haired angel. Up until now it'd been a vague, nebulous sensation that teased at the base of his wings. But yesterday it had hit him like an uppercut to the chin. *All my intestinal fortitude turned to dust!*

Completely underestimating how complicated things could get, as well as being caught completely off guard, Kaie's emotions sawed at his heart.

About last night—

The kid held his liquor pretty good (Kaie had previously confirmed the impressive extent of his tolerance), but the adult Daina had a pair of hollow legs and equal room to spare in his shoes. Last night, after his three-minute soak, the adult Daina had a few beers with Kaie as they gazed at the Moon.

He emptied three half-liter cans of beer and had his finger hooked into the pull-tab of the fourth before Kaie had even finished his first. And it wasn't because Kaie was a slow drinker. It was because Daina drank as if out of a fire hydrant.

“You’re sure pouring it down the gullet.”

“Human beer is pretty pallid stuff. Like water.”

“This stuff is? Damn, won’t open—” Kaie pursed his lips as the pull-tab snapped back against his finger. Daina silently took the can from him and had it open in a jiffy. *Wow, he’s got long fingers*, Kaie thought, blushing.

“Here, opened it,” Daina said, passing the can back to him with a gentle smile.

Damn! That smile! Damn!

“You’re not getting tipsy?” he asked aloud.

Daina chuckled to himself. With his long fingers he traced a line across Kaie’s cheek and raked back his bangs. *That feels good—so don’t do it! You’re already too beautiful as is. If this doesn’t stop, I won’t be able to stop my heart or my legs from opening!* With these lurid images welling up in his thoughts, Kaie leaned his weight against Daina.

“You’re my Number One wife, so go ahead and indulge yourself to your heart’s content.”

“Oh—um—I—” *What is with me? Getting turned on by the sight of this guy’s finger? Damn!* He was getting all hot and bothered again. N-no! Not hot and bothered—he was having a nervous breakdown! What if he didn’t become a splendid specimen of a man? Okay, sure, Daina was heir to the throne, a fine-looking man, apparently willing to take responsibility—but did Kaie really want to become this guy’s wife in Heaven?

As Kaie dreamt his big-ass dreams and heaved one sigh after the other, Daina was downing one beer after the other.

But Kaie didn’t have to keep *imagining* his future. He knew. He remembered what Daina had told him the first time they met: *Hey, Kaie. You’re going to make me one interesting wife.*

That’s right. *Daina hasn’t once told me he wants to marry me because he likes me.* And yet the black-haired angel went on about stuff like Kaie cranking out children. Was he one of those marriage-of-convenience types? No, it *was* better that they hated each other. Getting married when the wife’s unrequited love was

destined to never be answered in kind—

Kaie spirits felt as low as the last time he'd gone on a real bender.

Not only did his parents love each other equally, but their marriage had resulted from a passionate affair. That Kaie's first child should spring from a loveless marriage—a marriage in which his affections were never reciprocated—was simply too depressing to contemplate.

On top of that, he could hardly take pride in a romance that started off so badly on the wrong foot.

“Your hair has a wonderful scent.”

Oblivious as to his “wife’s” dark mood, Daina buried his face in Kaie’s still-damp hair and breathed deeply.

What the hell is sniffing me for? Kaie jerked up his head and smacked Daina up the side of his face. *I haven’t the slightest idea what I’m supposed to feel right now.*

Daina grunted and collapsed on the floor along with the beer cans. With a scornful look on his face, Kaie quickly turned off the lights and pulled the covers over his head.

—and that’s what happened last night.

So what do I do now if Daina climbs on top of me? Kaie wasn’t at all confident he’d be able to resist him. Even though he was technically both sexes, he was still mostly male! Sure, guy demons could do it with other guys, but not angels! Rushing in now where even angels feared to tread would turn their lives into one of those human soap operas: *You never really loved me,*

did you? You only wanted me for my body! And did that mean Daina was a gay angel?

If it was true, not only did it speak volumes to the pathetic position Kaie had found himself in, but were there other demons even unluckier than he? Kaie anguished like a fairy tale princess in love.

“Man, it’s hot.”

Daina emerged from the bathroom in boxers and a T-shirt. Kaie glanced at him. “Yeah, you’re as beautiful as always,” he said in a low voice, his cheeks reddening.

“Isn’t this body is the better one? Let’s make out.”

“Nobody said anything about making out!”

“As I recall, you definitely did.”

When Kaie tried to escape out of the window, Daina tackled him around the waist in an amazing burst of speed, flung him to the bed. Ironic, perhaps...it was something Kaie was quite notorious for doing to the child Daina. “You’re my wife, right? So the least you can do is give me a kiss.”

“You can’t be serious!” *Normally, a man tells his wife he loves her first!*

“You’re hardly one to talk, considering the position you’re in.”

His beautiful visage was right there in front of Kaie’s eyes. A few drops of water fell from his black hair.

“You’re really pissing me off, you dumb kid!”

“But I’m not a kid now. So what are you going to do?” Daina pinned Kaie’s arms firmly to the bed, grinning.

You stupid, stupid, stupid ass! I already like you! If you'd try a little tenderness, I wouldn't be giving you all this grief!

As if pushed over the brink, Kaie's anger at Daina erupted in a torrent of tears.

“What—?” Seeing Kaie's tear-stained face, Daina thought frantically, *I can't have done anything so awful to make him cry like that.*

“Kaie—?” he said aloud.

“Y-you—don't—know—*anything*—!”

Realizing that this was probably the first time Kaie was weeping for shame, Daina felt his desperation growing. He didn't have the slightest idea what had set Kaie off. Maybe he was holding Kaie's wrists too tightly, or lying atop of him meant his weight was making the tawny-haired demon uncomfortable. Both guesses were, of course, far from the mark.

At that moment came Kinu's voice, calling loudly from the door: “Evening, Kaie. We're a little early, but—”

And then Midori's: “Hey, Kaie. I brought some fried calamari dumplings. Let's eat up before they get cold—”

Daina froze.

“Huh? Nobody's answering. Why don't apply a little of our powers to the problem and go inside? We can wait there.”

“Kaie always says to use the front door when we drop by, so that's what we're doing. Yo, Kinu, the door's unlocked. Let's go in.”

Dressed casually in T-shirts and jeans, the

demon and the angel stomped into the apartment. They both knew the place like the back of their hands. They kicked off their shoes, not even bothering to turn them around and straighten them out first.

But soon they stopped right in their tracks, their eyes focused like lasers on the image of Daina—frozen as if in rigor mortis atop the bed—holding down the sobbing Kaie.

“Hey, Kaie’s crying.” Wearing an expression as stoic as a Noh mask, Kinu plucked a feather from his wings. At once, the feather morphed into a sword.

“You ain’t kidding.” With a similar expression on his face, Midori pulled out a single strand of hair that changed into a scythe. Angels carried swords, while demons carried scythes as their standard “side arms.”

“I don’t care how big a shot you are, Daina-sama. Making Kaie cry is something I won’t forgive!”

“And I’ve been friends with Kaie since we were kids. That’s a few centuries now, and I’ve only seen him crying twice! Including today!”

Offended, the two raised their weapons and advanced on Daina.

“Are you two going to make me a widower in the name of friendship?”

Though they had every intent of taking him down in two quick strokes, Daina’s question stopped them in their tracks.

“You must have done something pretty bad to make him cry.” Midori lowered his scythe, for now at least, and sighed.

“This is a quarrel between husband and wife.



None of your business.” Kaie finally extracted himself from beneath Daina’s rigid body and rubbed at his eyes.

A quarrel between husband and wife? When did it turn into that? Daina scowled and sat down cross-legged on the bed. He didn’t even notice that Kaie was covering for him. The big dummy.

“Well, if Kaie says so, no need to kick up a fuss about it.”

With a snap of his fingers, Kinu’s sword disappeared back into his wings.

“So that’s what this is all about,” Midori grumbled, deftly twirling the scythe about and returning it to a strand of his long hair.

“More importantly, wasn’t there something you needed to see me about?”

Kaie sat at the coffee table, again rubbing his eyes.

“Oh yes! That’s right! In all the excitement I completely forgot!”

“Yeah. Me too, me too.”

From the pockets of their jeans, they each carefully took a folded-up letter, placed it on the coffee table, folded their legs and sat down.

“What’s this letter?”

Kinu reverently opened the letter, giving Kaie a smile. “Mine is an official Celestial marriage license bearing the seal of the King.”

“Mine is an official Hades marriage license bearing the seal of the King. A marriage license between the subjects of different realms isn’t official unless

signed by the rulers of both kingdoms. That's the law, right? It came straight from Hades by registered mail. I had to wonder why it was being sent to me, though." Midori shook his golden ponytail and folded his arms.

"Mine also came via registered mail. It's been so long since I've gotten registered mail that I had to turn the place upside down to find my own personal seal so I could sign for it. Daina-sama, have you informed Heaven of your marriage?"

Kinu left all previous ill will behind him and queried Daina with a perfectly placid expression.

"The destroying angel probably opened his big mouth," said Daina, going on to explain in simple and forthright terms what had happened in the intervening days.

"Assassinating wives Number One through Number Six? They were a bunch of wicked old hags. When they get reincarnated they'll definitely end up as demons. How appropriate!"

"When you become heir you'll do things differently, eh, Daina-sama? Oh, a letter from the King was included."

Kinu stuffed his hand into the pocket of his jeans and took out another envelope (by now warmed by his body heat) and handed it over.

"What's this?" With a suspicious look on his face, Daina opened the letter and began to read:

Lord Daina,

According to a certain destroying angel, you've

managed to find yourself a wife while lost in the human realm! Well, you certainly take after your old man, getting the job done without a lot of horsing around. And what do you know, suddenly I find myself with six fewer bitchy wives! I thought I might seize the day and get myself a stable of lively young fillies as well (don't tell your mom, though). As far as I'm concerned, good job all the way around! Oh, the destroying angel tells me your wife is a real looker. I'm looking forward to meeting her.

All my best (pardon my brevity),

Daina's Papa

As Daina finished reading the letter, his shoulders sagged dejectedly and he heaved a heavy sigh. As opposed to polygamy as he was, killing off his father's wives meant he had unwittingly given his old man a golden opportunity to pick himself a whole new bouquet of fiancées.

What an idiot I am! Daina cursed himself for acting with so little forethought.

“Daina-sama, have you been disadvantaged in some way?”

“No, not in the least. My father is all for the marriage.” But his expression remained dark.

“That’s right. Kaie, I was also instructed to deliver you a letter. From Count Kagetsuyu.”

“From my father?”

He had no strong desire to accept it, but he didn't want to inconvenience Midori after he'd gone to all the trouble, so he took the envelope, crested with his family's coat of arms.

My dear Kaie,

Nice! When you marry *that* far above your station what's there to complain about? I'm delighted. And your mother is pleased as punch.

Word came to us from the Celestial King by means of the King of Hades, but that clumsy old you could snare the Celestial heir is quite a feat! You're the pride of the Kagetsuyu clan! We'll definitely throw a big reception for you. What do you think about party gifts? Whatever's in the fashionable catalogs these days is probably best. Though Heaven and Hades are bound to have different tastes.

Yes, of course, you'd better come home before the ceremony. Your friends and relatives will want to celebrate your good luck.

All the best,

Your loving Daddy

Upon reading the letter, Kaie was seized

by a violent migraine. *Why was I cursed with such embarrassing parents?* But quite different reasons were at the root of his white-knuckled state of mind.

“Are you all right, Kaie?”

“It’s—it’s nothing.”

“In that case, you’d better sign this quick and send it on its way.”

“Eh?”

“The sooner we start working on the celebrations, the better. Right, Kinu?”

“Indeed. The marriage doesn’t become official until both acceptances are confirmed.”

Kinu scrounged around on the shelf next to the window. He came up with a pen, and tossed it onto the coffee table.

“Got it. Name and address—would permanent residence and current address be okay?”

“Yes, Daina-sama. And then you need your seal.”

“What about my thumbprint? My personal seal is at the family estate.”

“A thumbprint’s okay. The two of us will act as witnesses.”

Daina nodded, and was about to affix his signature when Kaie bowled him over with a violent whack to the head.

“Ow!”

“Kaie! And on such an auspicious occasion!”

“What’s with you, man? Give a little warning next time!”

Midori and Kinu reversed course and flew to

Daina's defense.

"I can't sign these documents in this state!" Kaie bit his lower lip and clenched his fists until his fingers turned white.

"You're getting the pre-wedding jitters already? I'm telling you, you'll be okay, Kaie. No spiteful mothers-in-law to worry about. A happy future awaits you."

Kinu helped Daina to his feet from where he'd tumbled to the floor, clad only in his boxers. A smile rose to his lips.

Midori chimed in as well. "Of course. In Heaven, the retinue of a son or daughter-in-law from Hades can live large with no complaints. So we'll come to visit as often as possible."

"That's not what I'm talking about!" Kaie roared, slamming his fists down on the table top. He sprang to his feet. "This guy—*'You'll make me an interesting wife!'*—that's what he says to me!" He pointed at Daina.

"Yeah, I heard that too."

"Yes, a rare way to make a proposal."

The two tilted their heads, wondering if Daina's statement was really all that grave.

"I mean, normally people say stuff like, 'I love you, so let's get married' or 'You're the only one who makes me happy' or 'I want to eat a breakfast made by you every morning of my life.'"

Nobody spoke. Having worked for such a long time in the human world, Kaie had apparently gone native. Even knowing it was wrong to make fun, Kinu

and Midori couldn't keep their shoulders from shaking with laughter. Rubbing his sore head, Daina pursed his lips and frowned.

"But Daina hasn't said anything like that to me, not once! He doesn't respect my dreams of becoming a real man among men! He doesn't understand my concerns about being a guy who has to become a wife! All he thinks about is himself! '*You're interesting, so marry me,*' he says. It's like I'm the straight man in a standup comedy routine!"

Kaie spoke from the darkest corner of his heart. But Midori looked unbothered by the tawny-haired demon's confession. "Kaie can do standup comedy? You know, I'm pretty good at it too."

"I wouldn't disagree with you on that point," Kinu answered. The two of them carried on under their breath.

"Stop making fun of me!"

Daina rose to his feet, hands on his hips, like a comic book superhero. "All I'm hearing from you is a lot of complaining about things that don't matter to anybody!"

"They matter to me! This is a marriage between an angel and a hermaphrodite demon, right? Not to mention that you're the heir to the throne! What's a wife supposed to do when her husband doesn't love her back?"

"You mean you're upset because I didn't say I was in love with you when I asked you to marry me?"

"You still don't get it! *Idiot!*" Kaie roared, wringing his hands together.

“Is it okay for the two of us to keep hanging around here forever? Don’t you think things could get a little chancy?”

“Darn tootin’. If those documents don’t get signed, sealed, and delivered, we’ll be the ones catching the flack.”

Kinu and Midori slunk over to a corner of the room, whispering to each other.

“Oh, *I* see. Kaie loves me—” Daina smiled broadly, sending Kaie’s blood pressure climbing.

“Don’t smirk at me like that!”

“But I’m happy!”

“Just because you’re happy doesn’t mean *I* am!”

“No, you should be happy too.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“When it comes to love, our hearts are one and the same.”

Kaie stood in front of the beautiful and brightly smiling Daina, dumbfounded, his eyes growing wide. His two witnesses were equally taken aback.

“But—Daina—saying you love me—saying the word—” All the forcefulness in Kaie’s voice drained away.

“I’ve said it. I’ve definitely said it,” Daina insisted, folding his arms for added emphasis.

“When did you say it? The whole time we’ve been living together, I haven’t heard it once!”

“The first time I met you.”

“Huh?”

“The first time I met you, I said it then.”

The rest of them furrowed their brows in response to Daina's statement. Nobody remembered him saying, "I love Kaie," or anything like it.

"Um, Daina-sama," Kinu offered, timidly interrupting. "The way we see it, '*You're interesting, so be my wife*' is not quite—"

Beside him, Midori nodded emphatically.

Daina pulled a face, as if in a grimace. "I—um—ah—" He looked hard at Kaie, sounding as if he'd just had his wisdom teeth removed.

"What? Say it!"

"How am I, heir to the throne of Heaven, not to mention a man who's never been hard up for women, supposed to tell you I fell in love with you at first sight?!" His face flushed bright red.

"So—you said I was *interesting* instead?" Kaie asked, blushing himself.

"It's embarrassing!"

"And telling me I'd get demoted—?"

"If I didn't say that, you wouldn't have listened to a word I said, would you?"

"So—we both love each other?"

"That's what I've been trying to tell you all along!"

"But I want to become a real man."

"If you want to, that's fine with me. I'm not getting bent out of shape over such trifles."

"Maybe *you* won't, but *I* will."

"How's that?"

"But one day you're going to become the Celestial King, right? And you're going to want an heir."

But if I become a man, I'm hardly going to be able to give you one!"

"I could just as easily adopt a blood relative into the family. I'm going to be the king. Who's going to be in the position to complain if I do?"

"Well, then. I *will* become a man among men."

"Go ahead and do so to your heart's content, you silly little Kaie."

"Shut up, you big dummy Daina!"

The two of them glared at each other, faces aflame. It seemed as if the universe revolved around them.

Midori drew his brows together in disgust. "What a pair of horse's asses—" he muttered under his breath. Kinu nodded emphatically.

"Kaie, I want you—and only you—for my only wife. So let's get married and live together in happiness."

"I hope you don't expect me to be grateful, proposing to me dressed like *that*."

Indeed, Daina was standing there still clad only in boxers and a T-shirt.

"Yes! Okay, fine! I get all this lovey-dovey stuff, okay? Hurry up and sign the blasted forms! Please!"

"He ain't just blowing smoke, man! Enough with the drama queen act!"

Sensing the calm descending after the storm, the two witnesses finally moved to a full-court press.

"I have to agree. Look, Kaie, just sign the marriage license."

"Okay, okay. I give, I give."

Chapter 11

Kaie held the cold fried calamari in his hand.

“Nuke it for a few seconds. Won’t do wonders for the taste, but it’d be a shame to toss it. Good luck, eh?” That had been Midori’s excuse for a spur-of-the-moment engagement present.

“Sounds good to me. I’m hungry.”

“Whatever. I’m going to go soak my head.”

Kaie headed to the bathroom.

The congratulatory documents in hand, the two witnesses departed for Heaven and Hades, leaving Kaie and Daina alone in the apartment. And it was night to boot.

We swore our love to each other. This only leaves our relationship to be consummated. Daina chortled happily to himself and popped the fried calamari in the microwave.

Kaie stood under the stream of the shower and sighed. *Obviously, our love is mutual. It’s night. Daina is an adult. That only leaves—that only leaves—s-s-sex.* It never occurred to him that he’d be doing it with another guy. And as he’d never done it before, period, his heart pounded like a bass drum.

One of his older cousins, a succubus, said that if your lover’s a klutz, the first time hurts. *I’d rather give the hurting bit a pass, thank you very much—*

Such thoughts occupying his mind, Kaie scrubbed and cleaned more scrupulously than he normally did. Yet his body only told the truth.

After finishing off the fried calamari, Daina brushed and checked to make sure there wasn't any seaweed stuck between his teeth. He was very strict about etiquette before jumping in the sack. Everything was A-okay! Now he only had to wait for Kaie to get out of the bath.

Making a beeline for the bed, he again chuckled to himself, his shoulders shaking with glee.

“What’s with the creepy laugh?”

“Ah, no—” Daina turned around to find Kaie standing there, his sandy-colored hair dripping water, his body slightly pink. “You’re beautiful,” he said.

Kaie scowled. “That some kind of joke?”

“Not at all. I’d never waste my breath saying something so unkind to my wife.” Daina opened his arms wide in an inviting gesture.

“You really are an irritating bastard.” But Kaie came to a rest against Daina’s chest. “And now what do we do?”

“What do we do, indeed.” Daina drew his head closer.

Kaie shut his eyes.

At first a grazing kiss, their lips repeatedly nibbling and pecking at each other. Then a more intimate kiss, lips slightly parted, tongues entwining.

But—somehow—this feels—wonderful—

Kaie’s mind went white and hazy as he clung



firmly to Daina.

My darling Kaie. It only feels better and better, does it not? Daina eased Kaie down onto the bed. “Now you shall become my one true wife.”

“Meaning—now we do it?”

“To put it bluntly, yes.”

“I’ll die before I’d ever become a woman. I’m going to be a splendid specimen of a man. So don’t do me in that—peculiar—place.”

By “peculiar place,” Kaie meant the part of his anatomy particular to the female sex.

Daina was at a loss for words. That wasn’t much of a come-on. He looked at Kaie, a crease growing between his brows.

“Why so silent? If you penetrate me *there*, there’s almost no chance I’ll ever become a man.”

“Really?”

“My mom told me herself! That’s why you can’t!”

“You needn’t go on about it. I understand.” He wasn’t called the “King of the Celestial Night” for nothing. He’d put the full range of his technique on display. *Count on it.*

“W-what are you grinning about? Pervert!”

“And it’s only going to get more perverted after this,” he whispered softly.

Kaie’s face reddened as he threw his arms around Daina’s neck. “What an embarrassing bastard you are.”

“Let’s do even more embarrassing things together, just the two of us.” Daina smiled happily,

slowly stroking Kaie's body.

"If I say I don't like something, are you going to stop right away?"

"Of course." *I would never do something like that, now would I?* Kaie certainly was a little fool. But that's what made him so endearing.

"Are we doing it with the lights on?"

In Hades, Kaie could hardly walk down the block without bumping into a couple getting hot and heavy right there in the middle of the street. But having become accustomed to the ways of mortal men, it now seemed natural to him that sex should be done discretely, privately, and under the cover of the night.

"Unacceptable. Because I can't see your face in the dark."

"But—but—"

"Shhh—" Daina slid his fingers along Kaie's lower extremities, touching him as with a bouquet of feathers.

A sound, something between a purr and a pant, emerged from Kaie's throat.

"Does that feel good?"

"Yes—yes—there—there—"

"Oh, you're not being very cute and bashful at all." Such impertinent remarks on the occasion of his first time encouraged Daina to charge on ahead to his more superhuman techniques.

Kaie was rendered a pitiful wreck.

Chapter 12

As expected, Kaie’s “first time,” with Daina’s help (whatever kind of “help” was required) concluded on a successful note, or so it seemed to him.

“Why didn’t you stop when I said ‘No’ and ‘I don’t like that?’” Kaie asked, concerned.

“No man worth his salt stops when told to,” Daina replied succinctly.

It being his “first time,” Kaie didn’t understand the silent consent implied by saying “No, no” while feeling “Yes, yes.”

“Putting me in that embarrassing position and shoving that outrageous thing in that outrageous place—” Kaie grumbled, knitting his brows as he counted the numerous hickies strewn across his body.

“Huh. That was my extra-special, gorgeous hallelujah-hurricane love-bomb. I might have been overdoing things a little bit, though—” He flashed a broad grin, obviously quite pleased with himself.

At which point Kaie clotheslined him across the back of his neck. “What are talking about? What the hell is this *bomb*? Thanks to you my ass hurts like crazy, and you’re giving me this meaningless crap and running away from your responsibilities!”

“Everything was done out of love. You participated as well—”

“I gave you everything I could with one part of

my body.”

“You mean it didn’t feel good at all?” Daina asked, grasping Kaie in a bear hug.

“T—that’s—not—what—”

“So it *did* feel good?”

“It—felt good—at times—” Kaie mumbled, turning down a crooked path towards that uncertain tomorrow.

“Then let’s do it again. The night is young. Let’s see how many times we can do it before I turn back into a kid!”

“N-no, my mistake. It felt great! No, really! It felt great!”

But he pretty much oversold the proposition.

Their long arms and legs entwined like a pair of cuttlefish, and then the two of them slam-banged their way into the second round of play.

Chapter 13

Several days after his bewildering “first time,” Kaie was busy boxing up the contents of his apartment with Daina, getting ready to move.

“You should never stop playing the ingénue like that. It’s so cute,” Daina told him.

In short, Kaie had signed the marriage license and would be living in Daina’s palatial digs in Heaven. They were packing up.

“Don’t make jokes like that. Hand me the packing tape already!”

“I shall never forget you clinging to me, whispering and whimpering, ‘No, *Daina—I said—stop*—’ I have every intention of making you cry like that more often.”

Pow! Kaie all but knocked his block off.

“Ow! That’s child abuse, Kaie!” It was daytime so Daina was back to looking like a kid.

“Yeah, you always turn into a brat when it’s convenient for you!” Kaie yelled, wrapping each piece of silverware in a sheet of newspaper and stuffing them into a cardboard box.

“Well, then, how about you treat me like an adult even when I look like this?”

“That is not in the realm of possibilities.”

“How about we give sex a whirl like this, and if it works out, *then* you treat me like an adult?”

“That kind of stuff is only for nighttime! So you’d better not try and pull anything, kiddo!”

“Even though we’re going to be living together forever like two love birds?”

“There hasn’t even been a marriage ceremony, so nobody’s living together like a couple of stupid birds! As far as I’m concerned, signing the marriage license doesn’t count for anything!”

Kaie secretly yearned for the glittering pomp and circumstance of the weddings his relatives threw in Hades. On the occasion of his becoming a real man, together with his beautiful bride he was going to throw a wedding bash to beat them all!

Or so he’d thought. But now he wasn’t the husband, *he* was the bride. “What are you going to do about throwing me a big wedding?”

What a total and complete bother this is, Daina sniffed to himself. But he sat down on one of the shipping crates. “So, a marriage ceremony is a way for the man to announce to the world that now that we’re married: ‘*This woman is my wife, and any man who dares lays a hand on her is dead meat.*’ So the more spectacular the celebrations, the better the point gets across.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Wadding up an old newspaper, Kaie nodded to himself in agreement.

“And that’s your dream?”

“Hey, becoming a man among men and throwing a big wedding bash to show off my beautiful bride to the world is a pretty damned good dream!”

But Kaie’s current status was “wife” and “bride.”

“Great! Then I’ll make your dreams come true on your behalf. And on the day of this big wedding bash, you can wear an equally magnificent wedding dress!”

“Hey—huh? I haven’t got anything like that! I may be the *wife*, but I’m still going to become a real man. I can’t go around wearing a wedding dress. A white tuxedo is more like it!”

“I’m not familiar with the mores and practices of Hades, but in Heaven the bride is definitely wearing a wedding dress.” Daina folded his arms across his chest and scowled at Kaie.

“No—way—!” Kaie scowled back at him.

“If I’m going to throw a big wedding bash and declare before everybody that ‘This woman is *my* wife, and any man who dares lays a hand on her is dead meat,’ then you’re going to wear a dress!”

“I’m telling you, no way!”

Neither of them gave an inch. The silence stretched on as they looked at—or rather, glared at—each other.

Daina finally opened his mouth. “I really want to see you in a wedding dress.”

Overcome by embarrassment, Kaie scratched at his head and then resumed crumpling up the newspapers.

“Still—no go?” Daina slid off the shipping crate. Tightly grasping Kaie’s hands, he looked inquiringly into the tawny-haired demon’s eyes.

“Men don’t wear dresses.”

“But—?”

“Asking me that way, I suppose I could do it once—”

“Once is fine, if you do it for me.”

“I-I understand.”

What a silly goose Kaie was. A woman wore a wedding dress once in her life as a symbol of good luck. This was a custom practiced in all three realms, not just on Earth.

I have no desire to get divorced, so Kaie will be wearing a wedding dress only once. Daina grinned.

“E-enough of that. We better hurry up and finish packing. Midori and Kinu are coming to see us.”

But Kaie’s cheeks were already darkening with color.

“I love you Kaie. Let’s be happy together,” the child Daina whispered hotly in his ear, still holding his hands.

“W-we’ll be happy together,” Kaie echoed in a small, embarrassed voice.

Blown away by the sheer cuteness of Kaie’s mannerisms, Daina pursed his lips with the obvious expectation of a kiss. Kaie closed his eyes, caught up in the spirit of the moment as well.

But right at the moment when their lips were about to lock...

“Hey, everybody! We’re here to transport your stuff!”

“Are you two finally getting along with each other? Eh, Kaie?”

In a flash, Kinu and Midori materialized in the room. Shocked at their sudden appearance, Kaie immediately hurled Daina into a corner of the room.

“What’s this? A husband and wife spat? So soon?

So you two really are getting along!" Midori shoved his hands into the pockets of his jeans and chortled.

"Are these all the boxes you've got? We'd better get them transported to heaven lickity-split. Oh, and by the way, are you done *fixing* the landlord's memories of recent events?"

Kinu was dressed in a suit that suggested he was ducking out on his human-world work. He went over to the boxes to check them,

"T-those are the ones we finished this morning, but there's still some packing to do—" Kaie said to his colleague, clasping his hands to his burning face.

"Look, you gotta figure all this packing and shipping ain't worth spit. A brand-new wife turning over a brand-new leaf gets a brand-new home and brand-new things. Daina's putty in Kaie's hands, so he'll get him anything he wants. Right, Daina?"

Midori grinned at Daina, who ended up in the corner of the room amidst the trash. Robbed of his passionate kiss, Daina shot him an offended expression in turn, but as he harbored no objections to anything that would benefit Kaie, he nodded his head.

"But what a waste!"

"A waste? Give me a break. You'll be a regular princess after this, living way high on the hog. And someday the Queen!"

"Eh?" asked Kaie quizzically, raising an eyebrow.

"Are you saying that you're not even aware of your own position here? You're marrying Daina-sama. Daina-sama is the heir to the Celestial throne." Kinu sat

down in front of Kaie, knotting his brows.

“Oh—I forgot,” Kaie said, a note of surprise in his voice.

“My wife is an idiot,” Daina sighed. “No doubt about it.”

“Hey, hey, that’s okay. I’m sure it just dawned on him. Anyway, after this you’ll be getting a cram course in life as a princess, the whole nine yards. So chin up, Kaie.”

“Meaning what, Midori? ‘Cram course’? ‘Chin up’? I’m just going to Heaven to look after Daina, aren’t I?” Kaie shifted his inquiring glance from Midori to Kinu, who was after all a Celestial emissary. But Kinu averted his eyes, his face clouding over. It was suspicious behavior. Very suspicious.

“Don’t falling in love and getting married pretty much wrap things up? Besides, since I’m becoming a man, I don’t need to be treated like a princess or anything!”

“It all comes down to training in manners and etiquette, so don’t fret about it. I’ll be there by your side. Even when you’re being required to memorize some huge family tree—even when the rod is not being spared during your training in the mannerisms of a princess—even when you end up being confined to your room until you get the laws of Heaven down cold—”

Daina made his way through the mounds of boxes and sat down before Kaie, who was rather astonished. The black-haired angel patted him on the head reassuringly.

“But you can’t be there for everything! I’m

terrible at memorizing! I can't even remember the laws of Hades! How am I supposed to remember the laws of Heaven? We're getting a divorce!"

"No way! I'll never divorce you!"

"I've been *conned!* Midori! Kinu! This brat is nothing but a con artist! I was conned into a marriage under false pretenses!" Kaie threw himself on the floor and groaned mightily.

Kinu and Midori flew to Daina's defense. "You're exaggerating, Kaie. Daina-sama only kept silent because he had your best interests in mind."

"Yeah. If he'd been up front about it from the start, you would have wimped out long ago."

"I've heard enough! You're telling me that Heaven is no better than Hades and Hades no better than Heaven? This is a nightmare!"

"Even so, I'm taking Kaie with me to Heaven. And throwing the biggest bash of a wedding ever!"

"Daina! You're not listening to a single thing I'm saying!"

"I am! I am! I'm going to do everything in my power to make Kaie the best wife ever!" Daina leapt to his feet.

Kinu and Midori slunk away to observe from a safe distance whatever unexpected developments occurred next.

"All I want is a peaceful and uneventful life! I don't want to live in a Heaven where they gotta pound an education into you! So a divorce it is!"

"That's never gonna happen!"

The full-blown pre-marital brawl finally ended when Kinu and Midori sent the two to their respective corners. Soon they managed to get the whole kit and caboodle shipped out of the Earthly realm.

They were received by the Kings of Heaven and Hades, as well as Kaie's parents, who upon seeing the happy couple whispered to each other. "They're having a fight already? My, my, aren't these young people passionate."

Kaie appeared on the verge of tears and Daina, clinging tightly to his hand, looked like a wrung-out washcloth.

Kaie was sure he was the unluckiest demon in all the three realms! He was going to become a man, but here he was a princess! *Unbelievable!* And what was all this business about Celestial etiquette? He didn't marry Daina just to deliver himself into the clutches of another school system! If anything untoward happened, they were definitely getting a divorce!

"Don't cry. I'm telling you, I'll watch your back." Daina glanced up at the sniffling Kaie.

"If you don't, it's splitsville."

"I'll definitely hold up my end of the bargain. So please stop crying." Daina met Kaie's eyes and squeezed his hand reassuringly. Kaie timidly looked down into his earnest eyes. Child or adult, Daina's eyes did not change. "Please don't cry."

Kaie nodded in response to Daina's gentle pleas, though he still had a bad feeling about this.

Chapter 14

Persuaded by Daina's vigorous request that Kaie move as soon as possible into his personal palace, Kaie put off plans for family celebrations in Hades and headed to Heaven.

"You can't sulk forever. You can visit your family estate again after the marriage ceremony and honeymoon are over and done with," Daina told Kaie. They were riding in the resplendent carriage used by the Royal Family. Kaie had been staring the whole time out the window with a glum look on his face.

"But I haven't seen my parents in such a long time."

"I'm sorry about that."

Daina's magnanimity surprised Kaie. "What are you being so humble for? It's creeping me out."

"I don't want us to get divorced."

"R-really? Huh. Well, not a bad frame of mind to be in! Yeah, that's the ticket! Treat your wife with a little more consideration!"

Apparently back to his old self, Kaie grinned and mussed Daina's hair. "First time I've ever seen a flying horse. They're pretty cool. Is your place equally good looking?"

"Yeah, the remodeling of the newlywed suite should be about finished by now."

Kaie responded with a pleased smile.

“So the princess is...a hermaphrodite?”

“He claims in twenty years he shall become a man,” said Suehiro, the head butler. He sighed and turned to the man who had supervised the education of the Royal Family for generations. “How should we proceed, Yuuri-sama? Is it even proper to call him *princess*? Yet we can’t very well call him *prince* either.”

“Indeed. Our only prince is Daina-sama. In that case, would *princess* or *Kaie-sama* be satisfactory?” Yuuri brushed back his golden hair and smiled.

“After such a long time, the dreaded headmaster is reborn. Your last students were the daughters of the five late queens.”

“Yes, they’ve all been daughters. I did get quite tired of dealing with the female sex day after day. A change would be nice. Even if Kaie-sama is only half a man.”

“And what kind of man is he? Being that Daina-sama chose him, I expect there to be something a bit off about him.” Drawing his long, flaxen hair behind his back, Suehiro smiled wryly.

“I expect as much. No matter what sort of fellow he is, I shall humbly beat the knowledge of Heavenly laws and customs into him. I am a teaching professional. I compromise for nothing and no one.”

“I’ll be rooting for you from the sidelines, Yuuri-sama.”

“I deeply appreciate your support, Suehiro.”

In such a fashion were the two smiling angels chatting together when a court lady approached and made the announcement.



“Daina-sama and Kaie-sama have arrived.”

“Welcome home, Daina-sama!”

Met by the head butler, the royal tutor, and the ladies in waiting, Kaie’s eyes went wide with surprise. *Wow! A castle for one person has got this many servants!*

Their shimmering white wings glimmered in the sunlight as they bowed to Kaie as well.

“This is Kaie, my wife.” Kaie’s hand grasped tightly in his own, Daina made the introduction and planted a kiss on Kaie’s hand. With the air of his adult self it would have been a decisive gesture, but unfortunately he was currently a child.

And a child couldn’t be seen as anything but endearing to an adult. But perhaps because they were all used to Daina’s younger self, no one reacted in the least.

“H-happy to meet you all.” Kaie rather clumsy attempt to be polite was also met with bows and generous smiles.

“Daina-sama, you’ve certainly found yourself a fetching princess.” The chief butler smiled broadly, bowing before Kaie, and reverently bestowed the kiss of a family retainer on the back of his hand.

“Kaie, Suehiro has been looking after me since my childhood.”

“Suehiro-san?”

Though his outward appearance was as a man in his mid-twenties, Suehiro had been around for three times as long as Daina. More or less grasping that fact, Kaie addressed him adding the suffix “-san” to his name.

“Kaie-sama, please address me as Suehiro. The *-san* is not necessary.”

“S-sure,” Kaie nodded, after a moment of consternation.

“And this is Yuuri. He’ll be your tutor,” Daina said, introducing the attractive, if similar-looking man standing next to Suehiro. He was also dressed in a suit.

“My—tutor?” *A pretty-enough man, but appearances can be deceiving.* Kaie cleared his throat and turned his attention to him.

“I’m pleased to make your acquaintance, Kaie-sama. It shall be my privilege to instruct you about the ways of Heaven every day.”

“Every day—?”

“Yes,” Yuuri replied with a saccharine smile. “Until Kaie-sama understands all there is to understand. As long as it may require.”

This guy smiles like an angel, but he’s got the soul of a demon. Kaie was convinced Yuuri had big, fat ruler in his back pocket and couldn’t wait to use it. The first mistake Kaie made and it’d be like, “*You can’t remember? Don’t make me laugh! I never met a princess who couldn’t remember this!*” *Whack!*

Sorry, Kaie thought, but I don’t go for stuff like that. “My thanks to you in advance,” Kaie said, with upturned eyes.

“Suehiro, the wedding and reception will be held at the end of this month on *Taian*.” According to the Buddhist lunar calendar, Taian was the luckiest day of the week. “In the meantime, would you arrange for his dress?”

“As you wish, sir,” said Suehiro, his head bowed low.

“Well, we should go and settle into our new home now. Don’t come barging in unless I give the word, okay? Got that?”

The great crowd of servants chorused, “Yes!” in response.

“What—a—relief—!” Kaie sat himself down on a luxurious sofa and drew a deep breath. They were in Daina’s private quarters, otherwise known as the “newlywed suite.” In the center of the room was a big canopy bed.

“You like the place?” Daina asked, with some trepidation.

“Hey, it’s cool! Feels great! High class!” Kaie answered with a grin. *But from this day forward, it’s gonna be a daily battle with that tutor...*

Up until a few minutes ago, he’d been dead set against any kind of discipline, but having met face to face with the “headmaster,” he was ready to throw down the gauntlet. Kaie didn’t know what kind of a tutor this guy was, but he’d better treat him right! If the guy tried giving him the “little lady” business, Kaie would hand him his ass on a platter! *I’m becoming a man. Even Daina admits that. And a man’s gotta know his limits!*

Kaie committed himself to this course with a grin. Headmaster Yuuri’s worries were about to begin.

“Kaie, what are you smiling about?”

“Oh, nothing. I can really kick back to my heart’s content here, can’t I?”

“Yeah, that room of yours down on Earth was pretty cramped.” Daina beckoned Kaie to the bed. “I want to see your wings.”

“Meaning what?”

“Meaning I want to touch them. They’re smooth and feel so nice.” Daina opened his arms to Kaie in rapt admiration.

Kaie furrowed his brows in response, but it was no skin off his nose, so he ceded to his husband’s request. The wings that sprang forth from his back were not those of an angel, but shone lustrously like velvet in the shape and form of a bat’s.

“They’re beautiful.” Daina reached out and gently stroked the wings with his hands.

“Of course they are. If you gave me any lip about them being ugly and unclean—”

“If I did—?”

“I’d divorce you. Count on it.” Kaie gave Daina the same look he would a mischievous child and grinned.

“Well, I can’t have that,” Daina laughed.

The two sat on the bed, kissing lightly, pressing their lips against the others’ as if it was their first time.

Chapter 15

At any rate, despite some cats-and-dogs squabbling between Heaven and Hades, Daina and Kaie's wedding ceremony and reception went on without incident.

Kaie's parents and family were quite satisfied to have safely married off their hermaphrodite. And having bound their respective kingdoms more tightly together, the Kings of Heaven and Hades bantered together like a pair of politicians found anywhere on Earth.

As friends of the new bride, Midori and Kinu got drunk alongside their new best friends and serenaded Kaie with verses from "Bye Bye Love."

And aside from the angels who'd been hot for Daina all along, all the guests wished him well and enjoyed themselves.

After the tried-but-true honeymoon tour of world hot springs resorts, the fierce battle between Kaie and Headmaster Yuuri commenced. It wasn't long before the headmaster could be found chasing Kaie around his new home, a bunch of heavy books under his arm, screaming, "You're going to learn what's inside all of them!"

And Kaie being Kaie, he resisted if only for the sake of resisting: "How do you expect to me to memorize everything just like that?"

“Kaie! Hurry and finish your studies!” Daina yelled, throwing around what weight he could with his small frame as Kaie and Yuuri launched into another round of bickering. “If you don’t, we can’t hang out together!”

They were a pretty pathetic pair, getting raked across the coals for such a pitiable reason.

“Kaie-sama! You heard what Daina-sama said! Prepare your mind! Get it into your head!”

“But it can only get so far! I can only take in a little bit each day or I’ll forget everything!” Driven into a corner of the large drawing room, Kaie plucked the thinnest book from the stack Yuuri was carrying and announced his compromise.

Yuuri sighed. “If that’s the best we can do, that’s the best we can do.”

That was when Suehiro appeared carrying a tea set. “Things are certainly lively around here, Daina-sama.”

“The same thing every day. As is to be expected, the person causing Yuuri so much grief is my wife.”

“Kaie-sama can make even a talented teacher like Yuuri have to compromise,” chuckled Suehiro. He placed the tray on the table and began preparing afternoon tea.

“Hey, it’s tea time! Yuuri, time out on studying!”

“Time out?” Yuuri muttered, his shoulders slumping. “I wasn’t aware that the game had started.”

“Kaie—” Relaxing a step ahead of him, Daina looked at Kaie with upturned eyes.

“Huh? What?”

“What if you pursued a line of study appropriate for a prince rather than a princess?”

“What are we hashing this over again for?”

“I’m asking the questions.”

“Well—either way I’m becoming a man!” Kaie pursed his lips. “Studying what a prince does, rather than learning the duties of a princess and how the castle kitchens work and stuff—” He sat down at the table and with practiced etiquette brought the cup to his lips.

“What in the world is Daina-sama thinking?” Yuuri and Suehiro wondered aloud to each other.

“Yes. That’s what we’ll do.” Daina grinned and turned to Yuuri. “Yuuri, begin teaching Kaie as a prince. You have my permission.”

“What?” Kaie, Yuuri, and Suehiro all shouted at the same time.

“D-Daina!” Kaie cried out in a joyous voice. “Are you really okay with this?” He threw down the book he’d taken from Yuuri and seized Daina by the shoulders.

“Before we got married, I said I’d watch your back. I have the feeling that studying to be a prince would sink into your skull better.”

“This won’t do, Daina-sama!” Yuuri picked the book off the floor, protesting under great duress. “Celestial protocols must be observed!”

“It will! Since I’m becoming a man, I don’t need to bother with stuff like preparing meals! By studying to become a prince, when Daina becomes king, I can be right there to watch his back!”

“That’s my wife!” Daina placed the teacup on the table and wrapped his arms around Kaie’s waist. “We’re going to have fun tonight. To your heart’s content.”

“Don’t say things like that when you look like a kid!” Kaie whacked Daina on the head, his face reddening.

“Getting along wonderfully as always,” Suehiro said with a smile, offering cookies to the two lovebirds.

“This is the first time I’ve had to consider such a thing since becoming a tutor for the royal family. It’s quite unbelievable.”

“Yuuri, I’ll take care of things with my father, so don’t worry about it.” Still clinging to Kaie, Daina gave Yuuri a “V” sign with his fingers.

“I understand. I will educate Kaie-sama as a prince to the best of my abilities.”

“It wouldn’t hurt for you to lighten up a bit, Yuuri,” Kaie said with a wry smile. “Try a little tenderness.”

Yuuri shook his head. “I am a perfectionist, which is why my teaching may strike some as rigid and strict.”

“And that’s why I suggested you try a little tenderness!”

“I am afraid I am still recovering from the shock. I shall beg your leave for the time being in order to prepare Kaie-sama’s new curriculum. Please excuse me.”

With that, Yuuri bowed and left the drawing room.

“Yuuri-sama is certainly in a tizzy,” Suehiro observed nonchalantly. “In the three hundred years he’s been here, I’ve never seen him so distraught.”

Kaie started a bit. “Are you saying *I’m* the reason somebody so unflappable is losing his cool?”

“So it seems. I’ve certainly never managed to knock him that far off his stride.”

“That’s not the point! Stupid Daina!”

“Don’t call your husband stupid.”

“If you hadn’t come out with such a strange proposal, Yuuri wouldn’t have gotten so hot under the collar! You pull a wicked bad stunt like that while saying you’re watching my back!”

“You’re the one being the bad boy, throwing a tantrum every time you sit down to study,” Daina answered, still cleaving to Kaie’s side.

Kaie pulled a face. “We’re getting divorced.”

“Eh?”

“We’re getting divorced! I don’t want to be married to a guy who doesn’t give a damn about his wife’s feelings!”

“What’s this about, all of a sudden?”

“Enough! I’m going back to Hades!”

“You think I’m going to allow that?”

“I’m going home!”

“You’re not going anywhere!”

As the quarrel went on and on, Suehiro placed the tea set on the tray and left the room, doing his best to pretend nothing was amiss.

“Suehiro-sama, I’ve been hearing some

unusually loud voices. Is everything all right?"

A large number of concerned servants had gathered outside the drawing room and were waiting for him.

"Hardly," Suehiro answered, a touch of ironic laughter in his voice. "The same old squabbling. As well as they get along together, they do run hot and cold. There's no reason for any of you to fret."

It was just another lover's quarrel between Prince Daina and Princess Kaie. They were now the talk of Heaven.

And so Kaie began his education as a prince of the realm. Following a curriculum far more demanding than that of a princess, day in and day out he wracked his brains until his head was screaming for relief.

Part II: I'm Sorry Darling

Chapter 16

The Celestial Palace. Another day, another kicked-back early afternoon. In the study, Kaie and Headmaster Yuuri were going over the particulars of his “princehood.”

“Today makes twenty years,” Yuuri said with heartfelt emotion as he handed Kaie a formidable pile of material for him to memorize.

“What’s that?”

“Today marks the twentieth year since I began your instruction as a prince. Such a long time, yet it seems like mere days—”

“That much time has passed? Hard to believe.”

“And there’s still so much for you to learn. But twenty years has indeed gone by.”

Kaie looked a bit startled at Yuuri’s words. “Eh? There’s still that much left? Just how many more decades am I going to have to stick around here to learn all this stuff? My brains are crammed to the gills as is.”

“As far back as I can remember, members of the royal family have studied the laws of Heaven and the ways of royalty—among other subjects—for thirty to forty years on average. Of course this does not include the ordinary academic requirements. The accumulation of daily learning is the hallmark of a royal upbringing.” Giving Kaie a stern look, Yuuri drew his cheeks tightly and spoke fervently.

“In other words, we’re talking about me having study another decade or two with daily instruction by you. Now that you mention it, all this time Daina has been whispering stuff I don’t understand in my ears.”

“And what has he been saying to you?”

“He calls it *hypnopedia*, sleep learning. In bed, while I’m falling asleep, he whispers the laws of Heaven in my ear. At first I asked him what in the world he was doing. Gave me goosebumps.”

Yuuri furrowed his brows but in the next moment let out a chuckle of laughter. “That is surely typical of Daina-sama. Indeed, by using hypnopedia the amount of study required during the day is diminished and the time he can spend with you is in turn increased. A compelling reason, don’t you think?”

“That’s it, undoubtedly. He’s not whispering sweet nothings like *I love you*, but how in Heaven we do things like *this* and how in Heaven we do things like *that*. Kind of an annoying turn-off, don’t you think?” Kaie leaned back in his chair. “It felt weird so I slugged him and told him to knock it off. He shrugged and laughed.

“You hit him?”

“Well even if he stopped doing it, I haven’t been sleeping well lately, anyway. It’s pissing me off. What is it with me these days? It’s like I’m getting hot flashes or something. I know it’s not a cold, but—”

“Kaie-sama!”

Mid-sentence, Kaie tipped over backwards in the chair and crashed to the floor.

“Kaie-sama!” Yuuri cradled Kaie in his arms

and called his name. No answer. “Somebody help! Something’s happened to the princess!”

Carrying Kaie in his arms he kicked open the doors with his foot (rules of decorum notwithstanding) and rushed down the hallway, calling out at the top of his voice.

Huh? Kaie thought. Who’s yelling in my ear? Shut up already! I just want to sleep—

“Kaie!” Throwing discretion and propriety to the wind, Daina shouted, his loud and distressed voice echoing in his wife’s ears.

Kaie’s eyes flew open.

“He’s awake!”

“Of course, in the end love triumphs over all, Daina-sama.”

“First of all, let’s see how he is faring.”

“I’ll take his pulse,” said the court physician.

He’d been laid out on a resplendent and luxurious bed. Peering down at him, Daina, Suehiro (the butler), Yuuri (his tutor), and the court physician each spoke in turn.

“Eh? What? What am I in bed for? I was studying with Yuuri—” Kaie began.

“You stupid idiot! Fainting like that! Are you trying to make a widower out of me?” Daina yelled, clinging to Kaie with all his might. There was something extremely odd about him blurting out words like “widower” in his child form.

“Fainting? I don’t remember that,” puzzled Kaie, giving Daina a reassuring hug.

“What do you mean you don’t remember? Your condition suddenly went south and you keeled over, didn’t you?”

Perplexed, the court physician turned to Daina and Kaie. “Excuse me, but—um—to that end, a medical examination would—”

“Call a female doctor! I can’t allow another man to touch Kaie. No, Kaie being a demon, request a female doctor from Hades! Suehiro!”

“Understood.” Suehiro bowed and left the bedroom.

“Kaie-sama having regained consciousness, we shall take our leave as well.” Yuuri left the room as well, dragging along the court physician, who himself was not eager to leave.

“Daina, just how long are you going to keep clinging to me like that?”

“Doesn’t having your spouse close by make you feel better? Or are you saying that after all our years together you’re still playing the ingénue?”

“I’m saying that you’re heavy! Are you gaining weight?”

“I’m a regular growing boy. It doesn’t mean I’m not getting fat or anything.”

“So, in time, you’re going to grow into an adult? Like how you look after your evening bath?”

“Probably in a century or two—”

“Why such a long time?”

Daina noted the crestfallen expression that suddenly appeared on Kaie’s face and pouted. “Big or small, I’m always me, right?”

“Yeah, I suppose, but—” *But the one who really set my heart racing was the adult Daina. Not this shrimp.* Kaie patted Daina on the head and smiled ruefully.

Daina furrowed his brow and pursed his lips. “This all came about because I’ve been leaving you to your own devices recently, hasn’t it?”

“Huh? What?”

“Since becoming the Celestial King, I’ve been hard at work from sunup to sundown restructuring departments, creating new spiritual administration bureaus, revising the laws, and generally ignoring my dear Kaie. So, feeling overlooked, you fainted. Quite subconsciously, of course.”

Pow! Kaie delivered a roundhouse to Daina’s head. “I’m not some woman who pitches a fit to draw attention to herself! Stupid ass! I’m going to become a man among men! Understand?”

“Sure I do. That’s why I always take you from behind when we do it.”

“Don’t talk about stuff like that during the day!” Kaie’s face reddened and he slugged Daina again.

This time he dodged the blow. “How many decades do you think we’ve been married, silly Kaie?” Smiling, Daina drew closer and kissed Kaie lightly. Though physically a child, his mannerisms were those of a resplendent man.

Exchanging many nibbling kisses like this, Kaie grew more docile.

“Shall we do something different?” Daina whispered into Kaie’s ear.

“N-now?”

“Yeah, now.”

Suehiro should be bringing by that lady doctor from Hades any minute now—”

“It’s okay.”

“It’s *not* okay! What exactly do you want me to do to a kid like you?” Kaie smacked the covers, whumping Daina who was burrowing down around his midsection.

“What was that for?” complained Daina, poking his head out from beneath the downy quilts.

“I don’t have a thing for little kids!”

“I’m not a kid!”

“Idiot! You sure look like one now!”

“You don’t love me when I do that—”

“So what the hell are you doing it for?” Kaie pinched both of Daina’s cheeks with and yanked hard. “You expect me to love that?” he roared.

“Well, well, Kaie-chan. For such a shy one, you certainly have become outgoing.”

Dead silence.

The sight of a demon suddenly appearing in the bedroom struck the two of them dumb. They froze in place like two lumps of stone. The woman who’d called so cheerfully out to Kaie was wearing a brilliant cheongsam, her hair tied back in a chignon. And as with any demon, a pair of bat-like wings sprouted from her back.

“Mayu-chan!”

“Kaie, you know this person?” Daina looked back and forth from Kaie to this trespassing demon. He couldn’t believe that just anybody could pop into



his bedroom unannounced like this! He really must do something about the security.

“Mayu-chan is a good friend of mine from Hades!” Kaie released Daina, hopped off the bed. Wearing a big, happy smile he said to the woman, “Hey, long time no see!”

“Yeah, same here. But it’s not a good idea to be jumping around like that right after fainting. Get back in bed.”

“Eh? Mayu-chan, you’re not telling me you’re the—”

“I am. I’m the doctor from Hades. Suehiro-san gave me a call and I flew here as fast as I could.” She explained, escorting Kaie back to the bed.

Suehiro arrived as well. “Sorry for the delay,” he said. He was accompanied by Kaie’s mother. “Kaie-sama’s mother insisted upon seeing him, so I brought her with me.”

Kaie was at a loss for words. Daina wore a look of consternation. Having strangers crawling all over his private living quarters was off-putting in the extreme.

“Please forgive the interruption, Your Highness. But I had concerns of my own. I’m sorry to make such an imposition, but could I ask the gentlemen to please wait outside?” The sensuous and bewitching smile of a succubus rising to her lips, she hurried Suehiro and Daina out of the room.

Kaie scowled at his mother. “Mom, what the hell is going on?”

“Kaie, you must listen very carefully to

everything Mayu and I have to say to you. You see, you—”

“An outrage! Giving the husband the boot as well!” Daina leaned against the bedroom door and sighed.

“What’s this? Daina-sama and Suehiro, what are you doing out here in the hall? And Kaie-sama?”

No doubt coming back to check on Kaie’s condition, Yuuri appeared carrying a vase boasting a gorgeous flower arrangement.

“All the men got thrown out. Exactly what is going on in there?”

“Really. Well, I probably shouldn’t go in then. And after all the trouble I went through with these flowers—”

“What’s taking so long? And Suehiro, what’s with the palace security? A mere angel or demon shouldn’t be able to just transport in here.”

“Ah, yes, there’s a reason for keeping security at level D—” Suehiro muttered, glancing down at Daina.

“Security level D? Suehiro!”

“Yes. Kaie-sama asked that Midori and Kinu be able to drop in unannounced—”

“Kaie did? Why wasn’t I consulted about this?”

“I assumed it was a private, family matter.”

“Well, that’s water under the bridge. Issue Midori and Kinu level S palace security passes so they can come and go as they please. Once you have, return palace security to its previous state. Got that?”

“I understand.” Suehiro bowed his head,

privately pleased that Daina wasn't about the bar the door to Kaie's friends.

After that, a fair amount of time passed. The three of them stood there in the hallway. Sensing that Daina was getting fed up and was about ready to blow his top, Suehiro said in a soothing manner, "Well, well, well. Being ejected from the room in such a manner makes one imagine waiting for news of Kaie-sama's pregnancy. Don't you think so, Daina-sama?"

Indeed, the chief butler had many years of experience greasing the wheels of civility under his belt.

"So, Suehiro, even when the point of entry is different, can a child still result?"

"Daina-sama! Please! Asking me such a question—!"

"—leaves you at loose ends."

"I couldn't have put it better," Suehiro answered with a nod and a nervous smile.

"As long as it's nothing serious, I'll be happy," Headmaster Yuuri said with a concerned expression. He was still holding the flower vase. "He may have the memory of a sieve, but Kaie-sama is my prized pupil."

Completely incapable of watching Kaie's back now, Daina could only weakly nod to Yuuri in response.

"I've had butterflies in my stomach since sundown. I wonder if this some kind of premonition? Either way, only ten more days until the big showdown! Keep your chin up, Kaie."

“Sudden loss of consciousness is one of the early symptoms of your body getting close its completed state. It means that you’re on the home stretch.

Kaie meekly listened to Mayu and his mother. “So I’m finally going to become a splendid specimen of a man?”

“Of course. But—indeed—um—Mayu-chan—?”

“Yes, what worries us the most is that—um—”

His mother and Mayu exchanged troubled looks and sighed.

“What worries you the most is what?” he pleaded, his heart pounding. “My body is going to be wracked with pain? I’m going to suddenly turn into a tub of lard? Or shrivel down to skin and bones?”

“If something like that happened this wouldn’t be so much of a problem,” the mother said to her son (presuming his sex for the time being), gently stroking the hair that was the same color as her own. She sighed again.

“What’s going on then? Out with it!”

“You’ve got the blood of a succubus running through your veins. A hermaphroditic demon, before becoming an adult, broadcasts pheromones all over the place that say to anyone, angel or demon or human: *Come on over and let’s party!* What’s more, you’ll find yourself all the more addicted to sex. Once your sex is determined, only the individual you’re targeting will fall prey to your pheromones. We’ve done a number of surveys in Hades among hermaphroditic lust demons and the statistical analysis bears this out.”

“Mayu-chan, you’ve done a statistical analysis

on something like that?" Kaie pressed his hands against his head, at a complete loss.

"We have. The Queen herself pretty much made hay of public morals around Heaven." His mother folded her arms with an amorous air, cocking her head to the side.

"Bad enough that the laws of Heaven could barely keep her in check! Now that you mention it...Mom, you weren't a hermaphrodite, but did you go through that phase too?"

"Of course I did."

"What? What happened?"

"What happened? Well, what happened was that your father and I spent morning, noon and night in bed together. I didn't want any strange men coming on to me, you see. And your father, being a vigorous young man, was up to the task. It's because I married your father before reaching my full womanhood. Ah, but those were the most fantastic and dreamy ten days of my life."

Kaie's head slumped in profound dejection. *I suppose I could spend the ten days alone in bed with Daina. But doing it morning, noon and night? No way! No way no way no way!*

He never begrudged Daina's physical form so deeply in his heart until now.

"Kaie-chan, why so silent? What if you took a trip somewhere with His Royal Highness until you've safely achieved manhood? For example, rented an island in the South Pacific on Earth? Wouldn't that be just adorable? Like in the movies."

"If only he could be a splendid young man

morning, noon, and night—" Kaie grumbled under his breath. "Why did it have to come to this?" He sighed.

"But what's the problem? You have no ardent desire to do it with Daina-chan in his juvenile form? True, it does strike a depraved chord, but your mother finds it quite the turn-on."

"I don't care if it's a turn-on for you! I can't stand it!"

"My, my, haven't you become the picky eater."

"That's not it!" Kaie shouted, flopping backwards on the bed.

"Kaie-chan, you're not yourself right now. Don't do anything to raise your blood pressure unnecessarily. In any event, you need to rest for the time being. And after two or three days, you and His Royal Highness should depart for a villa somewhere. You're not sick, so this is the only advice I can give you as a doctor." Mayu patted Kaie on the head and smiled wryly.

Kaie felt himself relenting.

"Do you best to become a splendid specimen of a man, Kaie."

"That's why I intend to do," Kaie replied, turning to his mother and flashing her a V-for-victory sign with his fingers.

Chapter 17

After waiting for what seemed like forever, the men retreated to the drawing room while Suehiro prepared afternoon tea.

“And here I was sure the flowers would brighten up the room—” Yuuri scowled at the vase presently decorating the windowsill.

“But it’s an emergency situation. That’s unfortunately the way things have turned out, Yuuri-sama. But they do smell very nice. What kind of flowers are they?” Suehiro asked, serving them a plate of cookies.

“Red chateau roses. They ask the recipient to please forgive him for being so selfish.”

At that moment Daina coughed, spitting out a mouthful of red tea.

“They’d be perfect for your bedroom, don’t you think? Daina-sama, are you all right?”

“Yuuri, you needn’t bother yourself at such times as these,” Daina coughed, glaring at Yuuri.

Suehiro suppressed a smile as he daubed at Daina’s mess with a napkin.

“Still, Daina-sama—” Yuuri stared to say.

At that moment, Kaie’s mother and Mayu arrived, escorted by a servant.

“Doctor! How’s Kaie doing?” Daina called out, roughly setting the teacup down on the table and wiping his mouth.

“Kaie-chan is not sick, Your Royal Highness.”

“Eh?” The heads of all three men turned at the same time.

“Then what in the world has happened to Kaie-sama?” scowled Suehiro, who had served him now for twenty years.

The drawing room fell silent.

Mayu cleared her throat and smiled at them reassuringly. “Albeit somewhat belatedly, Kaie-chan has begun his sexual assignment. What’s happening to him is due to the changes in his physiology. It is nothing to be overly concerned about.”

“Sexual assignment?”

“Yes. That’s why I think it’d be a good idea if you were to go somewhere for the next ten days or so, just the two of you.”

Not understanding what Mayu was getting at, Daina later heard the flabbergasting truth from her and Kaie’s mother.

Chapter 18

Nighttime in Heaven.

As soon as the sun had set, Daina jumped into the bathtub. He returned to his adult self after his usual three-minute soak.

“Well, then.” He pulled on his bathrobe and as he always did, sprinted down the hall to the marital bedroom. The servants unofficially dubbed it “Daina-sama’s evening dash of passion,” but he wasn’t so certain about the actual truth of that description.

“Kaie, you’d better brace yourself tonight!” Hardly words as beautiful as the lips from which they emerged, but that’s what Daina called out as he dove into the bed.

His back turned to him, Kaie didn’t say a word.

“Eh? What’s up, Kaie?” All gears engaged and ready to go, he peered into Kaie’s face. “Hey, why won’t you answer?”

“When I think about what’s going to happen next, I just can’t bear the thought of going through with it—”

“By that you mean the period of time before your final sex assignment, when you’ll be turned into a raging sex addict?”

“Yeah—” Kaie turned around to face Daina.

“If that’s the way things are, then that’s the way things are. As far as my royal duties go, I can have my

dad come out of retirement for a short spell. And then you and I can shack up in a royal summer house somewhere and spend the days rutting like rabbits.” Wrapping his arms around Kaie, Daina spoke in an enraptured voice. “Days of heaven.”

“Just a sec. You’re forgetting the most important thing.”

“The most important thing? There’s a villa on an island in Indonesia. It’s more to my father’s taste but it’ll do fine, don’t you think? I hear the fruit there is fantastic.”

“That’s not what I’m talking about!”

Now that Daina had returned to his fully adult stature, Kaie could drape his arms around Daina’s neck, revealing his contorted countenance. *H-he’s so cute!* Daina thought. *You’re acting in such a cute manner, Kaie!* It might have been painful, but his unswerving determination for the last twenty years was finally paying off!

A field of flowers blooming in his thoughts, Daina kissed his conflicted wife’s cheek.

“I do this at night—with the adult Daina. But you’re a child during the day. What are you going to do then?”

Daina had no ready reply.

“What if, during the day, I say something like, ‘I can’t stand it any more!’ What are you going to do then?”

“Kaie.”

“Eh?”

“Is that what you’ve been thinking about ever

since everybody left?" Daina asked in a low voice, narrowing his eyes to slits.

Kaie nodded.

"No matter how many decades go by, my wife remains an idiot."

"Shut up! Don't call me an idiot!"

"You leave everything to me."

"But no matter how hard you try, Daina, during the daytime you're the equivalent of a fifth or sixth grader on Earth."

"The point is, even if sex is not okay for *me*, it'd still be okay for me to get *you* off, wouldn't it?"

"Don't say things like that with a face like that! It's embarrassing!" Kaie head-butted Daina on the forehead and sat in the middle of the bed, preparing all kinds of cryptic verbal abuse to throw at him.

"Okay, okay. Shall we proceed from where we left off with that kiss?"

"I fainted today—"

"But not because you're really sick, so it's okay. It's because you're becoming a fine specimen of a man."

"What's that supposed to mean? You're not making any sense!"

"Forget about it. Just be quiet." Daina smiled casually as he removed Kaie's pajama bottoms.

I'm a sucker for that smile, Kaie thought wryly to himself, abandoning himself to Daina's machinations.

Chapter 19

The next morning Daina summoned his father (the retired king) to the palace, temporarily handed over the reins of power, and left town.

“Daina-sama, the personnel at the villa have prepared enough food and other consumables to last at least twenty days. Regardless of what else might occur, it should be sufficient to stave off any inconveniences. And Kaie-sama, I pray that you may become a fine young man without incident. Take care.”

Suehiro showed Kaie an uneasy smile. The palace was being left in his care during their absence.

“Enjoy your ten—no, twenty—day vacation. And when you return, Kaie-sama, we’ll begin studying the history of the Celestial Parliament of Angels. I, too, anxiously await your return and look forward to you truly becoming a man among men. I would be most delighted if, during your stay at the villa, you could review your studies up to now.”

Headmaster Yuuri handed Kaie a volume on Celestial Law.

“Take care, Daina-sama, Kaie-sama.”

A crowd of servants waited at the palace gates to see them off. “Cheers! Become a wonderful man and return safely home!”

Practically dragged by Daina as they soared into the air, Kaie continued waving to them until they were out of sight.

Blues skies. White clouds. A beautiful ocean transparent as glass.

“Holy cow! What a sight! This is so great! I never would have believed there was a place this fantastic on Earth!” Kaie cried out. He ran down the beach dressed in “resort fashion”: a T-shirt, Bermuda shorts, and flip-flops.

“For somebody who claims to hate kids, you sure act like one.” Daina sat down on a rocky outcropping in the shade of a tree and watched Kaie frolicking on the sand. It was an image that summed up Kaie’s character.

“It sure is hot, but not sticky. I could really get used to this place!” His feet covered with sand, Kaie went over to where Daina was sitting.

“That’s because the humidity is relatively low. It’s cool enough in the shade to make it perfect for an afternoon siesta.” Daina found it pleasing to see his wife so happy. He’d thought his dad was nuts when he found out about the villa, but he could see now how it could prove quite useful.

There were humans on the islands across the straits, but this was a private island, so they had the place entirely to themselves.

“Yuuri told me to study, but I don’t really see it happening,” Kaie said, brushing the sand from his feet. “Forget studying. I have the feeling everything I’ve committed to memory so far is going to evaporate out of my skull!”

“Don’t mention my number one fear so casually!” Daina said angrily.

Kaie smiled in return. The next moment, though,

he fell over in a swoon.

“Whoa! Kaie! You can’t go fainting in a place like this!”

“Finally!”

Drenched with sweat, Daina somehow managed to haul Kaie into bed. Because he’d been dragged from the rocky outcropping, he gotten pretty dirty from the knees down, but there was nothing Daina could have done to prevent that.

“If you’re gonna faint, it’s better if you do it at night. I can’t carry you around in this form, no matter how much I want to.”

His hair was plastered to his sweaty forehead. He raked his hand through his bangs and sat on the bed, peering at the unconscious Kaie. He fainted yesterday and again today. How many more days was this spate of fainting going to continue?

Daina examined Kaie’s face, a deeply meaningful smile rising to his lips.

The one-story bungalow followed an architectural style indigenous to the locale, but it was constructed with attention to air circulation, so that refreshing currents of air were always wafting through the rooms.

Suehiro and an elite squad of maids and janitors had cleaned and restocked the villa overnight, so neither Daina nor Kaie had to concern themselves traveling hither and yon to go shopping. Taking a breather in these temperate climes wasn’t half bad.

Before he knew it, Daina had dozed off as well.

“Hey, Daina. Wake up! It’s nighttime. I’ve prepared your bath, so in you go!”

“What?”

“Up and at ‘em, sleepy-head!” Kaie tucked Daina under his arm and hauled him to the bathroom.

“You feeling okay?”

“Eh? I don’t faint because I’m sick, so I’m as good as I was before.”

“Let’s bathe together then.”

“Like hell.”

Kaie’s immediate reaction made Daina pout.
“Why not?”

Kaie put Daina down in the changing room, squatting so they were seeing eye-to-eye. “I have no desire to see you change into an adult. It creeps me out.”

“You don’t love me?”

“That’s not what I’m saying!”

“If you really loved me, you would accept all of me! You wouldn’t avert your eyes from the reality.”

“Well, there are times when I want to!”

“Yeah, you don’t really love me. We’ve only been together twenty years and we’re already in a rut. When love goes, all that’s left is the sentiment.” Daina heaved an exaggerated sigh and grumpily went about undressing.

“Good grief, you sound like a character straight out of those soap operas that human housewives watch.”

“But we’ve never once bathed together.”

“You really want to that bad?”

“Yeah.”

“And we’re both equipped the same, right?”

“But you have one extra opening, don’t you?”

“One extra is one too many!” Kaie rapped Daina on the head and then started taking off his clothes. “And no getting mad at me if this transformation of yours makes me holler. It’d serve you right.”

“Fine with me.”

Giddy at the prospect of bathing together for the first time since their marriage, Daina stripped down to his birthday suit.

Washing their bodies together before getting into the tub, they seemed like an ordinary lovey-dovey couple.

However, during the first three minutes after getting into the bathtub, Kaie made sure his back was turned to Daina. Wearing a terrified expression on his face, he had no desire to see Daina’s morphing scene. Watching him blow up in some writhing, gooey mass would blow their love life for the next hundred years in one shot.

As awful images flashed through his mind, he heard Daina call to him from behind. “I’m all grown up!”

“S-sure—?” Kaie nervously turned around.

There in front of him, dripping with warm bath water, was Daina in fully adult form.

“What are you looking so happy for? Damn it all.”

“No, that’s not what—”

“I know it’s dumb getting jealous of myself but it just doesn’t sit well.” Daina reached out and gently

stroked Kaie's cheek.

"We're not doing it in the bathtub, okay?"

"What? Why not?" Daina cried, clearly wounded by Kaie's words.

"*Why not?* You've got two full-sized men here. Banging around inside the bathtub, splashing water and writhing all over the place—think about it for a second! We're not a pair of mating whales!"

"You're the one talking about whales. Trying to kill the mood, are you?"

"Then don't say stuff like that!" Kaie submerged himself up to his neck, stretched out his legs and poked Daina in the chest.

"What are you doing to you precious husband?"

"Sorry. It's my long legs."

"Behave more ladylike."

"Who you calling a lady? Idiot." Grinning, Kaie thumped Daina's chest with his feet.

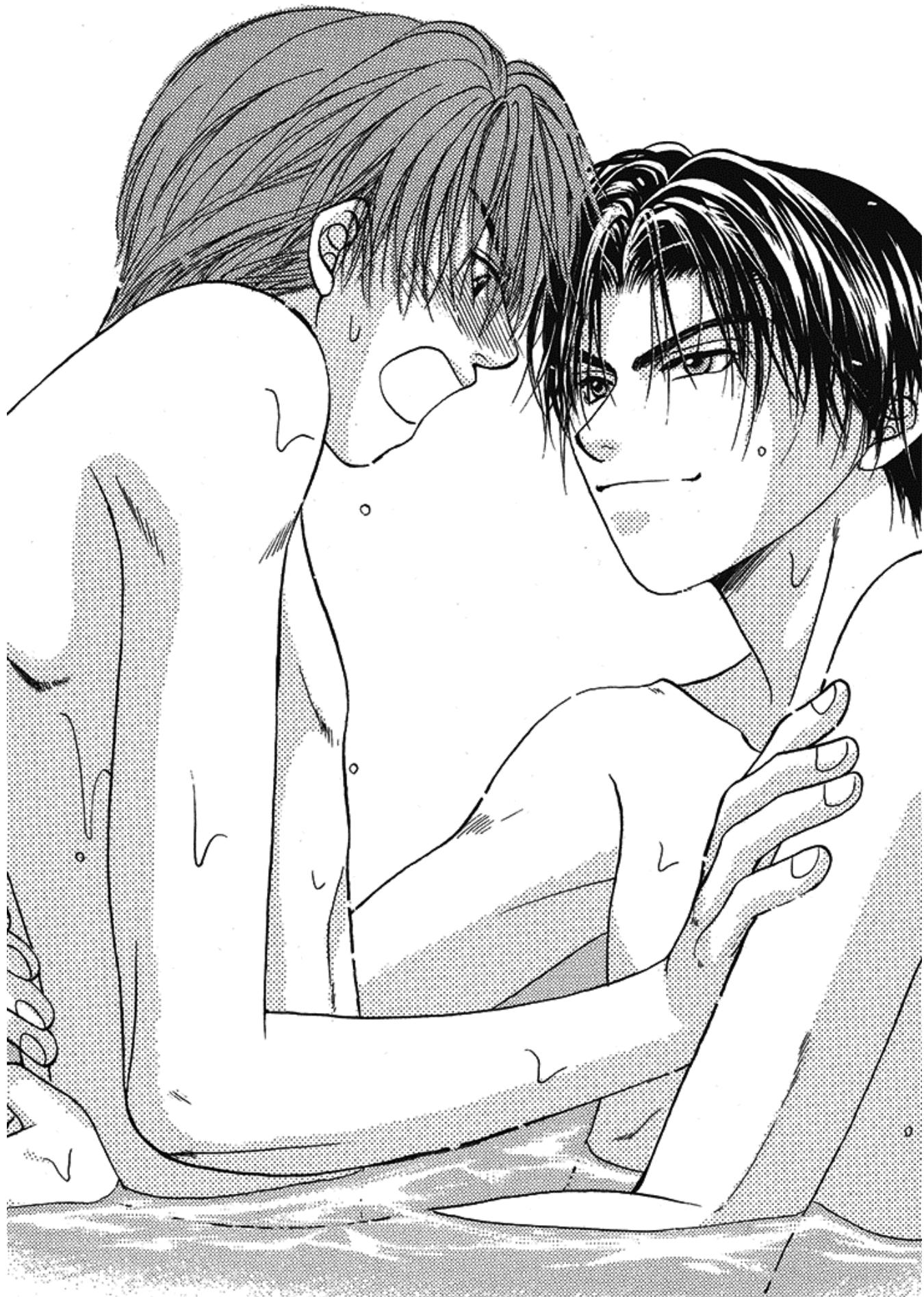
"If you're going to take that attitude—" Daina grasped the ankle of the foot striking his chest and strong-armed his way back to the middle of the tub, nimbly wrapping his other arm around Kaie's waist and drawing him closer.

"H-hey!" Kaie squirmed, forcibly positioned into straddling Daina's lower extremities.

"I wonder if we could do it like this—" A wicked smile rising to his lips, Daina ran his hands across Kaie's hips and bottom.

"The bathtub is not a place for sex!"

"Who made up that rule?"



“I-I just did. You start something, but who knows what weirdness is going to happen? Some white, foreign substance bubbling up— Not to mention—”

“Kaie.” Daina scowled with obvious displeasure and sighed.

“What’s that for?”

“Why do you always have to condense everything down to their practical implications?”

“Because I don’t want to be in the tub with semen floating around in it. You got a problem with that? Who do you think’s gonna clean up after you?”

“Okay, okay. The little fellow’s lost his backbone anyway,” Daina muttered weakly. He climbed out of the tub doing a good imitation of a sloth.

Kaie pursed his lips and submerged himself for a while in the tub. He wasn’t the bad guy here! Sex was something people did in bed at night! This wasn’t a scene out of one of those human porno mags, so they weren’t doing it in the bathroom!

Dressed in a bathrobe, steam wafting up from his hair, Kaie opened the bedroom door. Daina was talking with somebody on his supernatural realms cell phone.

“—it can’t be helped. I understand. I’ll leave now.” He answered curtly and closed the connection.

“Who was that on the phone?” Kaie asked, completely forgetting the verbal spat they had a mere ten minutes before. Weren’t they supposed to be on a vacation where the outside world wouldn’t come

barging in, circumstances notwithstanding? Who could be so inconsiderate? He could help but feel a little bit sorry for Daina, who'd even brought his hotline phone all the way here.

“That was my father. Something happened that only I can deal with. I’ve got to head back.”

Daina retrieved a pair of underwear and a T-shirt, got a suit out of the closet, shed his bathrobe, and began to change clothes.

“Eh? We just got here and we’re leaving already?”

“I’m the only one who has to go back. You wait for me here.”

“If it’s for your job I guess you don’t have a choice.”

“You won’t be lonely, will you?” Daina asked, cocking his head to one side and looking at Kaie with upturned eyes.

“Not as long as you get back right away, I’ll be okay. Hurry up and don’t dawdle,” Kaie answered, wearing a slightly conflicted expression that was quite adorable.

Daina kissed him with a quick peck on the cheek. “Anything more than that and I wouldn’t be able to restrain myself. Well, I’ll finish everything up there and be right back.”

And with that, he transported himself away.

“I wonder if he’ll be back by tonight? I might as well go to bed.”

Kaie crawled into the oversized bed. “G’night, Daina,” he muttered, and fell asleep.

Chapter 20

The sky was blue, the clouds white. The ocean waters lapping the beach were almost transparently clear.

“You ought to go for a swim,” Kaie told himself. Now and then the water sparkled, perhaps disturbed by fish swimming close to the surface.

But Kaie sat on the rocky outcropping in the shadow of the trees staring out at the horizon. Daina had promised to conclude his activities expeditiously yet still hadn’t returned by dawn.

“What’s taking that idiot so long?” wondered Kaie, cursing the empty air. He furiously popped open a can of beer and downed half of it. *So this is the insignificance of a single man*, he thought abstractly to himself.

Before meeting Daina, he’d lived alone in the human realm. Midori and Kinu were his friends and colleagues, but that didn’t mean they spent every waking moment together. His life with Daina, however, had been a hundred and eighty degrees different.

“It’s your fault. Dogging my steps twenty-four seven. Now I hate being alone. You’re such an idiot, Daina.”

Even when his work as Celestial King took him away all day, they would share a bed at night. And in that bed their passionate physical bonding blossomed.

“Ah, nothing but time on my hands.” If he knew this was how things were going to turn out, he would have brought his supernatural realms cell phone along. Then at least he could have overcome the boredom by talking with Midori or Kinu.

All of Headmaster Yuuri’s admonitions to buckle down study had flown out of his head.

“Man, it’s getting hot. Must be the beer.”

Gingerly cradling his flushed cheeks in the palms of his hands, Kaie let out a sigh so long that his spirit almost seemed ready to leave his body. It still hadn’t occurred to him that the burning sensation was not in the least caused by the alcohol.

Chapter 21

The innermost room in the Celestial Palace. Here at the heart of the realm, the computers chattering on as if impervious to his presence, sat Daina.

“Sorry about this, Daina. I kind of accidentally hit the enter key and it started doing this.”

The happily retired king—or rather, Daina’s dad—cast his sulking son a wry grin as he ran through the data dump next to him.

“That *accidental* mistake of yours was damned near fatal. Why in the world didn’t you back up the climate data before pressing that key? Old fool.”

As this was the middle of the afternoon, Daina’s physical size was the same as any sixth grader.

“Well, you see, I was late for a date with my bride, and was rushing things along a bit.”

Daina answered only with a glare.

Just the other day the retired king had been on a mad fling with a lively young thing he’d brought up from Hades. “What a looker! She’s *so* cute. I can bear being away from her for an instant. Nothing like a young bride, huh son? So when are you getting yourself another one?”

That question caused Daina’s fingers to suddenly freeze above the keyboard. “Dad—”

“What?”

“To spare yourself a clobbering from yours

truly,” Daina said in a low, sour tone of voice, “I suggest you shut up and vacate the premises. I don’t need the aggravation of you sitting right there and chattering in my ear right now.”

“Ah,” his father muttered, and left.

“Good grief, what a dirty old man.”

In fact, the computer system had crashed, corrupting the Celestial weather and royal family historical data. A backup for the royal family historical data existed, but five of the next ten years of Celestial weather data had gone missing.

And in an additional stroke of bad luck, the data from three days hence was gone as well. If Daina didn’t recreate this data and quick, the climate in Heaven would cease to exist in three days. The question was, would he be able to backfill that gap?

The twice-daily computer file audit was part of the Celestial King’s job description. Nonetheless, the old king hadn’t touched a keyboard in twenty years, it not being his cup of tea to start with. His upcoming tryst with his new bride occupying his thoughts, he went ahead and pressed the key.

“Kaie is no doubt pissed. For the time being, I’ll ask Suehiro or Yuuri to send a message.”

With no hope of exiting the room anytime soon, Daina dialed an internal line, and got Suehiro on the phone.

Chapter 22

What was going on this body of his? He was really burning up. No way was this the result of having a beer or two. *Though it's not like I'm feeling run down or anything. Rather—*

The thought made him start. *It figures this would be happening to me, when Daina isn't here*— He hugged his arms around his chest and muttered, “Damn, I’m feeling randy.”

The pre-sexual assignment symptoms were manifesting themselves.

“I really, really want to get down with somebody. I’ll do it in the bath, I’ll do it anywhere. This is one itch I can’t scratch.” If Daina was here he’d no doubt be shedding tears of joy.

“I’d better go back and wait there.”

He jacked off and then trudged back to the villa, feelings of misery clouding his mind.

Chapter 23

Suehiro was getting ready to deliver Daina's message to Kaie when a unexpected visitor showed up.

"I heard that Daina was holed up in the computer room. I'm here to see his wife, though. Where is she?"

With his flowing, golden locks and eyes like blue jade, he was the quintessential angel. Poised beneath an ornamental tree in the garden, the visitor smiled at Suehiro before approaching him.

"Crown Prince Kaen-sama, I'm sorry but I haven't the time right now. I would greatly appreciate it if you could visit at a future date. In any case, requesting a meeting with Kaie-sama at a time when Daina-sama is not present is completely out of the question."

"Well, I can't stand him and he can't stand me. So I think we're both better off passing like two ships in the night. Don't you think so, Suehiro? I'm his cousin and he didn't even invite me to the wedding. I haven't even seen the face of his dear bride. Now, where is she?"

"You really should call on her another time."

"So I take it she's not in the palace. Were I to accompany you, should I meet her then?"

"That would be the case, but I must respectfully decline your request."

"Now, now. I won't take no for an answer," Crown Prince Kaen implored, wearing a charming

smile. But Suehiro would not relent.

“If not, then I must endeavor to remind you of your manners.” Suehiro frowned and folded his arms across his chest.

“Goodness gracious, look who’s here. Lutz-sama, it’s been ages.” Yuuri appeared at that moment, his voice filled with an unusual degree of scorn.

“Ah, Yuuri. How many years as it been exactly?”

“Indeed. I ceased tutoring you a good five hundred years ago, so that would make it five centuries, would it not? At any rate, what brings you here today?”

“I came to see Daina’s wife—Hey, Suehiro! No fair! Going on ahead of me!”

Taking advantage of Yuuri’s sudden appearance, Suehiro soared into the air, Crown Prince Kaen Lutz’s cries echoing at his back.

“Hold your horses, Lutz-sama. After such a long-delayed reunion, don’t you think the least you could do is sit down in the drawing room and enjoy a spot of tea? Right now Suehiro and I are supposed to be holding down the fort, so why not take your shoes off and stay a while? Chat about the good old days. You really were an ill-mannered student. Angels or devils, unmarried or married regardless, what went on beneath your belt buckle caused problems to no ed.”

Yuuri grabbed Lutz’s arm to keep him from pursuing Suehiro and flashed him an ill-tempered smile.

“I don’t have the time for that right now.”

“I heard that you hit on a certain somebody under Crown Prince Taki Thunder’s loving care and in

return, he beat you to a pulp. Scary, don't you think, how alike he and Daina-sama are? A good thing you made it out alive."

"How do *you* know that?" Lutz-sama asked, pulling a face and glaring at Yuuri.

"Taki-sama told the story when he came to the palace with work-related papers for Daina-sama to sign. Taki-sama warned Daina-sama that you had similar designs on his wife and should be tossed out the instant you showed your face."

"Is that so? Despite the years between them, Daina and Taki see eye to eye on most things. They get along too well, in fact. I'm the one who always ends up alone—" His agreeable tone of voice notwithstanding, a bystander could almost hear Lutz cursing Taki in his heart: *Son of a bitch! That little turd Taki! Shooting off his big mouth to everybody!* Though anger burned in his heart, on the outside he dressed his thoughts in the trappings of a handsome gentleman.

"Acting so charitably does not convince me, Lutz-sama. Let's take tea together and await Suehiro's return. We'd hardly allow you to lay one finger on Her Royal Highness, so you'd do well to dismiss the thought from your mind."

"You're being impudent, Yuuri. You know my father, Count Matsuhira? You say things like that to his heir and you're gonna pay!"

"Have you forgotten that the tutor to the Royal Family enjoys extraterritorial tenure? In the language of a certain human cinema action hero, that means a license to kill. No questions asked."

Yuuri chuckled in a low voice, a look of ferocity on his face that he'd never once shown to Kaie.

Chapter 24

Suehiro arrived at the secluded southern island, at the resort that was home to the villa and Kaie, its sole occupant.

“Kaie-sama? Excuse me?” he called out, loosening his necktie as he entered the house (nobody bothered locking the doors around here). “Are you home, Kaie-sama?”

Suehiro went to each room in the house calling out Kaie’s name. Even though referred to as a villa, it was a rather compact bungalow. Soon all that remained now was the one bedroom.

“Kaie-sama? Knock-knock?” Suehiro slowly opened the door and stopped in surprise.

Kaie lay prostrate on the bed moaning.

“Kaie-sama!” Suehiro turned Kaie over and held him against his chest. “You body is burning. Kaie-sama, it’s Suehiro. Do you understand? Suehiro’s come to see you.” He seemed delirious. Suehiro thought he should probably call that doctor from Hades—Mayu. But then—

Kaie suddenly wrapped his arms around Suehiro’s neck.

“Kaie-sama!”

“Why the resistance? C’mon, let’s do it already.”

Kaie’s cloying voice made Suehiro blush.

“Impossible, Kaie-sama! Control yourself!”

The sweet scent of Kaie’s body, however, set Suehiro’s passion all aflutter. This was no doubt the result of the pheromones Kaie-sama’s mother spoke about, that trigger an insatiable nymphomania in those affected. Suehiro was in one hell of a pinch. But he was a professional butler, after all.

“I’ve been waiting for you for so long—” Kaie clung to him like glue.

Suehiro brought all of his cold logic to the fore, pushing back the temptation. “Kaie-sama! I prefer a fair youth in my bed! One resembling a delicate and cloistered young lady of breeding. Not an exuberant, hard-edged young man such as yourself! I’m sorry, but I’m just not into you! There’s no way I can live up to your expectations!”

“Eh?” Kaie replied, a blank look on his face.

In that moment, Suehiro tore himself away from Kaie, pushing him back into the middle of the bed.

“W-who are you?”

Kaie pulled the bedcovers off himself. Eyeing his surroundings like a wary, wild animal, he shook his head. “Ah, it’s Suehiro.”

“Goodness gracious, but you’ve returned to your senses, Kaie-sama.” Suehiro wiped the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand and breathed a sigh of relief.

“My senses? That’s right! Don’t get any closer to me. I don’t want to wig out and do something we’ll both regret.” Kaie retreated to a corner of the bed and vigorously raked his hands through his hair.

“Yes. I understand. What just happened here shall be forever sealed in my heart.” As instructed, Suehiro put distance between himself and the bed.

“So, what was it you came to tell me?”

“But how do you know that?”

“You wouldn’t leave your duties at the palace except on Daina’s orders.” Kaie sat cross-legged on the bed and chuckled.

“The soonest Daina-sama will be able to return is two days hence.”

“Two days! What’s that fool thinking? What am I supposed to do with this *frustrated* body of mine? Unbelievable!” Kaie smashed his fist against the wall with an expression similar to the one he had shown the terrified destroying angel.

“Your anger should not be directed at Daina-sama but his father—” Suehiro took a cautious step backwards, cold sweat prickling his back.

“So my philandering father-in-law pulled some stupid stunt? And now it’s left to Daina to pick up the pieces?”

“That would be the case exactly.”

“That good-for-nothing—!”

Kaie’s similarly disrespectful attitude toward his father-in-law reminded Suehiro how spouses come to resemble each other.

“I can’t be away from the palace for long, so I should take my leave presently.”

“Going back already? You can at least stay for lunch?” Kaie didn’t want to thrown back on his own resource so soon. His forlorn expression stopped

Suehiro in his tracks.

Suehiro gulped. Despite his insistence that he preferred in his bed “a fair youth resembling a delicate and cloistered young lady of breeding,” he found his temperature rising.

“I don’t want to spend the next two days all alone here. There’s not even a television or radio in the place—” Kaie straightened out his legs and then drew his knees up to his chin, wrapping his arms around his legs.

The thought flashed through Suehiro’s mind: *That’s so cute, Kaie-sama! Wait, what am I thinking? Keep your mind out of the gutter, Suehiro! He’s the Royal Consort! And way out of my league!*

Suehiro took several deep breaths and fixed an impassive expression on his face. “I am deeply sorry, but only Daina-sama can serve your needs. You really must excuse me.”

“Aw, c’mon!” Kaie whined, pursing his lips. Unable to satiate his tortured body, he cast himself fitfully on the bedcovers.

Chapter 25

After being mercilessly strong-armed into keeping Yuuri company, Lutz left the Imperial Palace behind him, his belly filled to the brim with tea.

“What a *bastard* that Yuuri is! Practically pouring the bitter stuff straight down my throat! At least Suehiro would have offered me some sugar to go with it. And to top it all, I didn’t ever get to meet Daina’s wife! Damn it all!”

“Oh, is that Lutz? What are you doing here? Daina’s in the computer room. Kaie-chan’s at my villa, so I assumed nobody was home.” The speaker was none other than Daina’s father, the retired king. He had his young bride on his arm and a big smile on his face.

“Uncle, what good timing! And just where would this villa of yours happen to be?”

“Still up to no good, are you? Don’t the Matsuhiras have a villa of their own?”

“My dear uncle, must I hear such gossip even from you? I’m telling you, nobody’s being inveigled anywhere. I’d simply like to get away by myself now and then.” But all the while cursing him to his heart: *Son of a bitch! This old geezer got fed the same story as Yuuri! Can nobody keep his mouth shut around here? And getting lectured to by this cradle-robbing lecher to boot!*

But he didn’t lose his cool and kept a civil smile on his face.

“Hmm, Kaie-chan did end up sleeping all by his lonesome. Well, Lutz, if I give you the location, you must promise to keep him good company. Oh, and no funny business, please. You’re liable to catch a beating in the bargain, and if Daina finds out, he’ll just kill you.”

“I know, I know. I have so much to offer without ever laying one finger on another man’s woman.” He answered with an angelic smile, while in his heart thinking: *Another man’s wife—nothing sounds more deliciously obscene than that! Viva lasciviousness!*

In that moment all of Suehiro and Yuuri’s efforts were for naught.

Chapter 26

The sandy beach glittered like dancing flames in the moonlight. Kaie yanked open the pull-tab on a can of beer, trying to drown his frustrations in alcohol. He downed more cans than he could count, but still remained frustratingly sober. *Forget becoming a man. I'm going to turn into an alcoholic.*

Even the sea breeze stroking his hair and skin felt good for all the wrong reasons. *I know what's going on, but my body is still dying to do it!*

He drained the can in a single gulp and cried out to the crimson moon, “Daina, you big freaking idiot!”

Lighting the dining room with the solar globe he'd brought with him from Heaven, Kaie began eating his bland dinner alone.

“Geez, what a sad meal.”

If he'd been cooking for two, he would have put a little more effort into the task, but without Daina he fell back into his old habit of eating microwavable food. Steam arose from the pasta as Kaie stabbed in his fork. He sighed.

A knock came from the front door.

“Eh?” Kaie said, turning his head toward the sound. Had Suehiro returned? No, that couldn't be it. Yuuri must be dropping by with more study materials in tow!

The only people who knew about this place were himself, Daina, their butler Suehiro, and Headmaster Yuuri. With this thought, Kaie hurried to the front door. As annoying as it was, the thought of studying yet more law—a course which never seemed to end—was preferable to being alone.

However, as soon as he opened the door he found there not Yuuri, but a man he'd never met before.

“Good evening. Excuse the interruption. I’m Crown Prince Lutz Kaen. I heard that you’d been forced to spend the night all by your lonesome and stopped by to see how you were doing.”

“Lutz?” He was pretty tall and good looking—though not as good looking as Daina. Beautiful golden hair and blue eyes. A one-hundred percent angel, though he did look pretty silly wearing an aloha shirt. But why the hell was he showing up here all of a sudden?

“I’m Daina’s cousin. Have you heard the name Matsuhira?”

“I’ve heard of it. Yukihira and Matsuhira are the royal family names.”

“I’m the eldest son of Matsuhira. Daina’s father said it was okay for me to come and visit you.”

“His father? Something that dirty old man asked you to do?”

“Dirty old man?”

“Whatever. Back to the subject at hand. And? Can you prove you are who you say you are?”

“Have a look at this.” Lutz held out his right hand, showing to Kaie the royal ring on his middle finger, and thinking gleefully to himself: *The harder the*

better. The more impertinent the better. So this is what tickles Daina's fancy so? Hot damn! My tastes exactly!

“Sure looks like the real thing. So you came to keep me company, eh? Well, come on in then.”

At Kaie's change in attitude, Lutz smiled awkwardly and entered the house. “Hey, this is the first time I've visited a villa in the South Pacific. I didn't expect the atmosphere to be so nice around here.”

“It is, isn't it? Want something to drink? Thanks to Daina, the liquor cabinet is well-stocked.”

“And what do you drink?”

“I'm a beer man, to be sure.”

“Then I'll have the same, if you don't mind.”

Lutz drew closer to Kaie, a faint smile playing across his lips, but with a perplexed expression Kaie stepped back, putting distance between them.

“What's wrong?”

“Oh, nothing. Just don't like people crowding my space,” Kaie mumbled. “That's all.” He quickly went to the fridge and took out a beer and tossed it to Lutz.

“And if I crowd your space? You aren't giving off some terrifically bad odor, are you? You're not covered with germs?”

“Piss off! I take a bath every day and scrub myself clean. I don't smell and I'm not dirty!”

“Then why so unapproachable?” Lutz asked, sidling up to Kaie. “Did Daina say something to you? He's a very jealous guy.”

“Yeah, more or less. But even so, if you keep crowding me like that I'm going to quit asking and start hitting.”

“Eh?” Lutz stopped in his tracks, recalling the retired king’s warning about “laying a finger on Kaie-chan” or something like that.

“I understand. So how far apart would you like?”

“Fifteen feet’s fine. Let’s keep things at arm’s length for the time being.”

Lutz nodded and Kaie breathed a sigh of relief. “So find yourself a seat and enjoy your beer. I’m going to go finish my dinner.”

Kaie went to the dining room and finished off the cold and tasteless microwave meal. Lutz was well-mannered and well-spoken. He came from the same bloodline as Daina, but wasn’t nearly as self-centered. Kaie had to give his father-in-law some credit; he’d have to remember to thank him for sending along a well-bred relative to break up the monotony.

Kaie didn’t know that Lutz was ill-mannered beneath the waist and that he’d been sent to live on Earth until he simmered down a bit. Wiping the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand, he felt his spirits lifting. Even if his after-dinner companion wasn’t his beloved darling, at least he wouldn’t be alone.

And that was quite a nice thought.

“Hey, Kaie. Is there a spare bedroom I could use? I thought I might as well stay over until Daina gets back.” Thought Lutz to himself: *Not that I would mind being forced to share the same bed as him! Infidelity doesn’t get any hotter than doing it with the Mrs. in her own bedroom!* A guileless smile came to his face as he shamelessly visualized the two of them getting it on together.

“See that door at the other end of the living room? You can use the guest bedroom. The toilet and bathroom are through the door off the dining room. My room is directly opposite yours.” Kaie stepped into the living room as he spoke, pointing out the doors as he explained the layout of the house.

“I get it. Why don’t we take our beers outside?”

“Why?”

“It’s a beautiful moonlit night. There’s nothing like a drink under the light of the Moon, eh?”

Kaie didn’t say anything, but was thrilled by Lutz’s suggestion. When nighttime fell the only thing on Daina’s mind was sex. He’d never proposed to Kaie that they enjoy a drink while gazing at the Moon.

“Or we could call it a night—?”

“No, no. Let’s go.” *How thoughtful he is! How different from Daina he is!* Kaie again brightened measurably and beer in hand, started after Lutz.

Chapter 27

Kaie had never known the moonlight could be this bright. The moonlight he knew was what he could see working in Tokyo: a dirty yellow obscured by smog.

“It’s beautiful.” Beer in hand, Kaie walked down the beach to the waterline, wading in up to his ankles as he gazed up at the sky.

Lutz sat down on the beach. Kaie was sure sexy bathed in the light of the Moon. *He’s got an ass well worth grabbing*, he thought, closely examining Kaie’s backside. But what was the deal about Kaie not wanting him to get any closer? What was going to happen if he did? *What a bother. I need to get to the bottom of this.* He grinned as these thoughts flitted about his mind.

Kaie walked back to towards him and sat down a good fifteen feet away. “Beer sure seems to taste better while you’re looking at the moon, Lutz.”

“I’m happy you think so.”

“Where have you been living until now, Lutz? In Heaven?” Kaie took a swig of the beer and tilted his head to the side inquisitively.

“I’ve been living here in the human realm. In Europe.”

“Really? Where in Europe?”

“Here and there and everywhere for the past five hundred years. I’ve seen Europe from one end to the other.”

“That’s great! You’re a lot more grown up than Daina.” Eager to hear more Kaie unconsciously inched nearer to Lutz.

“Is this okay? We’re getting pretty close.”

“Oh, you’re right. Sorry. I’ll keep my distance.”

Lutz grinned and grasped Kaie’s arm as he got up to move away. He looked intensely at his face.

“Let go—”

“You tell me what’s so bad about us being next to each other, and I’ll let you go.”

Right. As if Kaie was actually going to tell Lutz that the side effect of becoming a complete man was turning into a total nympho! *Like hell!* A strained expression on his face, Kaie drew his mouth into a straight line.

“You can tell me. I promise not to say a word to anybody else.”

“I don’t know—” The arm in Lutz’s grip grew hot. Kaie’s heart began to pound. This was bad. Way bad! *I’ve got to keep things in check! Getting a hard-on now would be the worst!*

Despite Kaie’s mounting panic, Lutz tried to draw Kaie closer to his chest. In that moment, Kaie made a fist with his free hand and delivered a blow that rang Lutz’s head like a bell.

“*Gwah—!*” The surprising force of the blow caused Lutz to release his hold on Kaie’s arm, and with a grunt that sounded like squashed bullfrog, sent him sprawling on the sand.

“S-sorry, Lutz!” yelped Kaie, at last jerking his body free and sprinting back to the villa.

Face red as he gasped for breath, Kaie made a beeline for the bathroom. “I was on the verge of being unfaithful!” Running the water for the tub, Kaie sat down on the tile floor and pressed his hands against his heart.

Ordinarily he would think nothing of it, but this was different. Wooed by such a beautiful angel, he was likely to open his legs before opening his heart. With nothing but perverse thoughts crowding his mind, Kaie took a deep breath. He started feeling guilty about slugging the clueless Lutz.

And here Lutz had stopped by to chat out of the kindness of his heart. “This is all Daina’s fault, for just up and leaving me here—”

He shed his clothing, which had become damp with the ocean breeze, before he going back to the dressing room. He locked the bathroom door. Under no circumstances did he want himself exposed to prying eyes.

“This is just so pathetic—” gazing down at his lower extremities, he couldn’t help but think that over and again. He entwined his fingers around his half-aroused member and took care of business. He satisfied the physical desires of his body while lashing out with any abusive language that came to mind. “Why isn’t Daina here?” and “He’d better get back here quick!” and “Why did this have to happen to me now?”

He didn’t want to do it all by himself, but he didn’t have a choice. His body demanded relief. “I’ve got to be the most pathetic man in Heaven,” he said, directing his ire at his member, rapidly becoming fully

aroused by the stimulation, even though sex was the last thing on his mind at the moment.

A few minutes later, with a low moan he accomplished the task. He looked in disgust at the fluid arcing onto the tile floor and then quickly showered.

“I’m still hot to trot. If this keeps on, I’m gonna end up doing it with Lutz. Heck, I’d do it with anyone. If I only do it once, I’ll definitely never let Daina find out.”

He started at the desperation in the sound of his own voice echoing off the walls of the bathroom.

“W-what the hell are you saying, Kaie? Buck yourself up! Your body may be crazy out of control, but you haven’t taken leave of your senses! You’re the Queen!” he told himself, hitting the tile with his fist. “Stupid Daina! Hurry up and get back here!”

Kaie sniffed painfully and again reached down towards his nether region.

Chapter 28

Nighttime in Heaven. Now in his adult form, Daina downed a nutrition drink labeled “Fight! Full throttle!” as he checked the half-rebuilt weather data.

Right now he knew that Kaie would be sleeping alone and terribly lonely. When it came to being a man, he was really falling down on the job. Imagining Kaie posing like *this* or looking like *that* allowed him to indulge in a brief moment of happiness. Kaie being Kaie, he was no doubt abusing himself and his throbbing length at the same time. Speaking of which, he sure would like to watch Kaie getting himself off.

As one would expect of any spouse, Daina had a firm grasp of Kaie’s predilections.

The broad grin on his face had grown steadily lewder by the time Yuuri stopped by. “Daina-sama, for someone so beautiful, you shouldn’t go around with such a creepy expression on your face. It’s quite depressing to behold.”

“Sorry about that. Something come up?”

“Lutz-sama showed up at the palace earlier. He wanted to see Kaie-sama.”

“What?!” he barked, the vulgar look on his face turning suddenly ferocious. “I’m holed up in the computer room and he takes the opportunity to make his move?”

“So it seems. But you’ve nothing to worry

about. Suehiro and I held our ground and repulsed the interloper.”

“Do you think he’s the kind of guy who’ll back down just like that? He’ll definitely figure out where Kaie is. Because Kaie is exactly his type!” Daina clucked to himself in disgust and continued, “If he could only behave himself on Earth— Where is Lutz right now, Yuuri?”

“One supposes he’s returned to the Matsuhira estate.”

“I’d like to act on this right now, but I’m only half done reconstructing this data. I can’t let the weather go out of control. It’d plunge Heaven into chaos. Sorry about this, Yuuri, but could you check to see whether Lutz is at the Matsuhira estate?”

“And if Lutz-sama is not at the Matsuhira estate?”

In response to Yuuri’s query, Daina’s eyes glittered. “Find out where he is. Leave no stone unturned. He can’t be allowed to lay a hand on Kaie. Damn it all. If Kaie falls into the clutches of a scoundrel like him, there’s no telling what would happen. Not to mention that Kaie is in a bad position right now. If Lutz does anything to him, I’ll obliterate him along with his entire clan.”

It was love at first sight that was responsible for the fast affections (or so Daina believed) that led him to marry Kaie twenty years ago. To Daina, Kaie was his special honeybun. He wasn’t simply handing him over to anybody.

The serious look on Daina’s face, one that he

saw so rarely, impressed upon Yuuri that having a spouse must indeed be a wonderful thing. “I understand. I will seek out Lutz-sama’s location.”

“Thanks.”

Yuuri bowed to Daina and left the computer room.

Daina opened the desk drawer and took out a picture of his beloved Kaie. Had Lutz really set his eyes on Kaie because he must be “his type”? That was hardly the problem here! What an extraordinary blunder on his part to completely forget Taki’s warning about Lutz!

He planted a wet kiss on the photograph. “Sorry for causing you so much anguish, Kaie. But hold out a little while longer.” With a hot and heavy voice he said, “When I’m done with this data, I’m not going to stop even when you say you’ve had enough. I won’t let you go.”

He kissed the photograph again, and with a conflicted expression set to work on the remaining weather data.

Chapter 29

Applying an ice pack to the cheek that had experienced the business end of Kaie's fist, Lutz kicked back on the guest bed. Pulling out his supernatural realms cell phone, he dialed an acquaintance in Hades.

“—and that’s why Kaie-chan is really going through a rough patch right now. It’s not so easy on his partner either, the Celestial King. But those two are welded together like rebar, so I think they’ll pull through okay.”

“Welded rebar or whatever, thanks for the info on Kaie, Mayu-chan.” But as he spoke, Lutz was countering with his own metaphor: *Apply a little heat and that rebar will melt like butter!*

“It’s all the same to me. But what’s with the sudden interest in Kaie-chan? You can’t seriously be thinking of making a move on him! The Celestial King will have you drawn and quartered if you try.”

“Don’t be silly. I don’t have designs on anybody’s spouse. It’s just that I hadn’t realized that Daina’s wife was a demon. I got curious as to what that was all about.”

“I smell something fishy, very fishy—”

“Snatching food off another man’s plate is only asking for trouble. So I don’t bother. Anyway, let’s go have a drink together sometime, you and me.”

“No problem. But you know my taste in men,

don't you? Pretty boys don't do it for me. I prefer rough edges and unfinished facades. The ones with a little flavor to them, a little spice."

In fact, this Mayu—the same Mayu who was a doctor in Hades—was the only woman who'd never succumbed to Lutz's wiles, no matter how hard he tried. But rejection only aroused him all the more. Now he was trying to inveigle a “friendly relationship” out of her.

“Sorry, but I'm just as beautiful as ever.”

“*Well, I'll rethink the proposition after you've ugled yourself up a bit. Don't you have anything better to do? I've got emergency cases waiting on me this evening so I'm going to have to say goodbye.*”

The supernatural realms cell phone beeped and went dead.

Lutz flashed the kind of evil grin that demons wore when they were up to no good. “How can I be expected to ignore the delicious prospect of him going all nympho? Someone's wife or a hermaphrodite who wants to become a man—it's all the same to me. This is one fountain I'll drink from to my heart's content. The look on Daina's face when he finds out will be something to see.”

Lutz, however, had forgotten about the existence of those pheromones broadcasting Kaie's aroused state like a bitch in heat. Rather than making Kaie his own plaything, it hadn't occurred to him that he was unwittingly becoming enslaved by Kaie's lusts.

“*Heh, heh, heh.* In my arms he'll sing like the cutest little bird.” Lutz said such irritating things, things that would prickle Kaie's skin and make him roar, with

an utterly straight face. “Now I’m on fire. I don’t know when Daina’s gonna make it back to the villa so I’d better get to work.”

He cast himself upon the bed, burning fervor in his heart. “The more unattainable the flower of sexual desire, the greater the conquest. The more dangerous the road to consummation, the greater the joy when the goal is achieved!”

“All right! Time to seize the day!”

Believing that it was only good manners to scrub every nook and cranny before jumping into the sack, Lutz leapt from the bed and headed to the bathroom.

Chapter 30

Kaie had jacked off twice in the bathroom and he still wanted more. *I really am horny to the core.* And the interval between the urges was rapidly growing smaller, Kaie couldn't help thinking dejectedly. "Daina, I know I complained every time you pushed me down on the bed, but that was my bad. I won't complain again from after this. I can't stand soldering on by myself this way. I'd rather do it with you. There's Lutz in the guest bedroom, but he's no good. If it's not you touching me and turning me on, then I'll just die because it'll never be enough. Being touched by someone you love is the biggest turn on, but it's taken me until now to realize this."

Finishing this long soliloquy with a tearful face, Kaie slowly knelt and buried his face in the pillow—which still carried something of Daina's faded scent—and slipped his hands down below the waist of his pajama bottoms.

Gathering together evidence to believe that Daina had once occupied this room, Kaie continued to move his fingers. At the lightest touch his cheeks flushed and his loins came alive. Kaie forged ahead, forcefully moving his hands.

In the restrained light he raised his hips, drawing his pajama bottoms and undershorts down to his knees. This way, no matter how many times he did it, he

wouldn't get all chapped and dried out. *But this is no time to be thinking about stupid stuff like that! What I should be thinking—*

Recalling how Daina used his hands, he firmly grasped his member and worked it hard. *Ah, man, this is so pathetic.* But he had to make do with what he had on hand. No pun intended.

Kaie did everything in his power to soothe his unmanageably impatient body. But then an unexpected, indescribable sensation between his legs made him turn his head in puzzlement.

“Something’s—different—?” Separating his fingers from his excited fullness, he searched deeper with both hands. Deploying all ten fingers and feeling himself with an unsparing attention to detail, he concluded, “Ah, there’s no hole—”

In other words, the female parts of his anatomy. “That extra opening disappearing means—”

But he wasn’t one hundred percent certain with touch alone. Kaie turned his attention towards the dresser. There had to be a hand mirror around somewhere. *There had to be.* It was a dresser, after all!

Applying this strange logic, he stripped off the pajama bottoms and undershorts that had bunched up around his knees and searched through the dresser drawers. Pushing aside the perfume and cologne most likely left there by Suehiro, he ransacked the drawer and at last came up with a compact-sized mirror.

“I won’t believe it until I see it with my own eyes.”

If Daina had been here, he would have insisted on delegating responsibility for the investigation to

himself. But right now Daina was holed up in the computer room in the Imperial Palace.

Kaie gulped and swallowed hard and placed the mirror on the floor and squatted above it.

“I can’t really see anything—”

After several attempts and a bit of fine tuning, he got a clear view of things. Kaie stared at the reflection of himself in the mirror for a long, silent five minutes. “No kidding. There’s nothing there. No matter which way I look at it.”

He again fell into silence. When he was jacking off in the bathroom it was definitely there. And now it wasn’t. *My extra opening disappearing means—*

“I did it! I’ve finally become one of the boys! No matter at what angle you look at me now, I am one fine specimen of a man! The happiest man in the universe!” Despite it being the middle of the night, he raised his voice in a great cry of joy.

“Something good happen?”

“Yeah! I finally became a man! And it only took three hundred years!”

“Is that right? Congratulations.”

“Thanks. Hey!” shouted Kaie, startled at the sight of the bathrobed Lutz, his attention focused on a particular point of his person. “What the hell are you doing in my bedroom?”

“I’m sorry about what happened on the beach. I came here to apologize.”

“Ah, um, forget about it. It’s nothing to worry about.” Hiding his nether regions with his hands, Kaie cast his eyes at the place where he’d discarded his

underwear and inched backwards in that direction.

“Nothing to worry about? I’d hoped you had worried about it.”

“W-what are you trying to say, Lutz?”

“Where the bed is concerned, one is the loneliest number—and your present condition suggests that you’ve been working hard to relieve the strain. You need only nod in my direction and I’d pitch in whenever you please. Or were you setting out for my bedroom? Just the way you are and all.”

Kaie watched with a drawn expression as Lutz approach him, an angelic smile upon his face. “Why the hell should I go to your room? I’m a married man, and I haven’t the slightest inclination to start any kind of affair! No way! Don’t tell me you’ve come under the spell of my pheromones—”

“What’s with the bad attitude? We shall sate ourselves in illicit love and join the ranks of fallen angels together.”

“Well, I’m a demon, so I’m not becoming some fallen angel! Not in this lifetime! Enough with the creepy come-ons! It’s making my skin crawl!”

Cutting a sad and ridiculous image with his hands over his privates, Kaie looked like the put-upon straight man in a stand-up comedy routine.

“I’m going to make short work of that moral outlook of yours,” Lutz said, pushing Kaie down on the bed.

“I’m serious! Stop it, Lutz! You’re letting my pheromones get the better of you!” Lutz was a “good person,” wasn’t he?

“I know the condition you’re in right now, Kaie. But do you really think your pheromones are responsible? I had this little assignation of ours planned before I ever met you.” Speaking with a ravishing smile rising to his lips, Lutz triumphed in his heart: *Yes! The moment when my true intentions are revealed! Bloody hell, but what a high!*

“Eh? You mean my father-in-law didn’t ask you to come here—”

“I was kidding about that.”

“—to keep me company?”

“Of course I was lying. Your naiveté is so endearing, Kaie.”

Those words made Kaie snap. “I don’t know how I’m gonna deal with you getting the jump on me,” he said, giving Lutz the same dreadful expression that had made the destroying angel break down in tears twenty years ago. He voice dropped to a raspy growl as he glared at Lutz. “But don’t go taking me for a fool!”

“You gonna to hit me? And how do you propose to accomplish that?”

“Shut up!” Kaie pushed back at Lutz with all his might, but gasped. “Ah—!”

In a flash Lutz had seized his privates. “Fine with me. Go ahead. Give me the old heave-ho. The body always tells the truth. Hurry up and buck me off.”

“Damn it all—”

Lutz had him in a loose grip, but the slightest sound of discontent from Kaie had him arching his back and baring his throat. Kaie again realized how long he’d been waiting for the touch of another.

“We both want this,” Lutz whispered in his ear. “So why don’t you just lie back and enjoy it?”

Kaie shook his head.

“It’s okay, I’m telling you. A one-time fling and Daina will never find out.”

“When it comes to betraying him, one time is as good as a million,” Kaie said fretfully, furrowing his brows and struggling to extricate himself from beneath Lutz’s body. However, his own body was so eager for sex it would not move as he pleased.

“When you’re getting hot like this, do you think you can outlast me? How stubborn you are! But breaking the will of a stubborn child is the fun part.”

Lutz slid down Kaie’s torso and kissed his stomach. Kaie moaned, his legs opening of their own accord. Shamefully betrayed by his unfaithful body, he thought, helplessly, *I’ve become a man, so why do I still want to do it so badly?* Even though his extra opening closed, the transformation wasn’t complete yet. That was the only thing that made sense.

His breaths coming fast and ragged, the thought horrified him. “You bastard rapist. I’m not through becoming a man. Let go of me already.”

“Oh, but this is consensual, isn’t it? Considering the way you feel and how wet you are.” Lutz explained merrily, his fingers fiddling with Kaie’s nether regions, “But if you keep saying such naughty things, I’m going to have to wash your mouth out.”

“Anytime anyone but Daina touches me, I call that rape.” Kaie pursed his lips, his eyes filling with tears of regret.

“Is that a rule Daina made up all by himself? It’s got nothing to do with me.”

That was when it finally dawned on Kaie that Daina and Lutz were not buds. After this dalliance, if Lutz let it be known far and wide that he’d done the nasty with Kaie-sama, Daina would be publicly shamed. And it would hardly end there. Offending the dignity of the Celestial King could well trigger a revolution! Scum like Lutz didn’t deserve to be called angels! But Kaie was in a dangerous position right now. It felt so good. *I won’t be able to keep it in much longer.*

Kaie’s thoughts were a bit over the top, but he wasn’t far off the mark. An affair with the queen would definitely become ruinous to Daina’s reputation.

It wasn’t like Lutz, though, to think that far ahead. Right now, “angel” was just another name for a wild beast. “Come while I’m watching. Show me the whole shooting match.”

“No way—!”

“But isn’t the little fellow saying so with all his heart?”

Lutz jacked his right hand with a wet, slippery sound. Kaie could no longer restrain himself. He crossed his arms over his face, with all his might trying to hide the emotions on his face from the world. *I’m sorry, Daina. But it felt good and this guy got me off. I’m not worthy to be your wife.*

If Daina asked for a divorce, he wouldn’t object.

Lutz was certain that Kaie would come after a few more rounds of gentle stimulation—

Suddenly a powerful force grabbed him by the hair, lifted him off Kaie and deposited him on the bed.

“What the hell are you doing to my honey?”

“Daina!” Lutz’s face contorted as he cried out the name of the person who had just materialized behind him and taken hold of his hair.

However, Kaie continued to hold his arms over his face, not moving even a feather’s breadth.

“You sure have an interesting way of paying your respects. As thanks, you shall be banished from all three realms. The writ of expulsion has been signed by the King of Hades, myself, and the Spiritual Administrative District Chief. Take this and run away to the furthest reaches of the universe. You have ten seconds. After that, the next time I see you I’ll kill you.”

Daina plucked strand of hair from his head that turned into a large sword: a glimmering black steel blade sporting a razor-sharp edge. Wielding it skillfully in one hand, he traced circles in the air in front of Lutz. Though he’d known from the time they’d been childhood playmates that Daina didn’t make idle threats, Lutz’s resolve remained strong (sort of), and didn’t fade in the slightest. *As long as I’m alive I’ll definitely coming back!* But why risk it in the meantime? Yeah, it was too bad he couldn’t make Kaie-chan his own, but now was the time to look out for priority number one!

He snatched the writ out of Daina’s hand and vanished into thin hair.

“If he was going to just turn tail and run,” spit Daina in disdain, “Then the fool shouldn’t have laid hands on what is mine in the first place.” With a flourish



he returned the sword to his scalp and then covered the petrified Kaie with his own body.

“My fault for being late,” he said gently, kissing Kaie’s hair and arms.

“Daina!” Kaie untangled his crossed arms and threw his arms around Daina’s back and hugged him tightly to him. “I can’t hold out any more!”

“I understand.” Patting his head reassuringly Daina reached down to Kaie’s groin.

Kaie grunted aloud at the blissful sensation of Daina’s fingers, his hips rocking along with the massaging rhythm. He climaxed almost immediately, the creamy, gushing fountain covering his stomach and Daina’s hands.

“Daina, don’t stop. It doesn’t feel right unless it’s you. *More. More...touch me more.* I don’t have to hold out any longer, do I?” Kaie sniffled, looking up at Daina with slightly resentful expression.

“Of course not. Why else do you think I’ve been working like crazy to finish up my duties? To make you climax as often as you want to, right?” Daina kissed Kaie with a casual smile.

Normally, Kaie would have demanded to know why he was being made fun of. “Stupid Daina!” he would have cursed him. But this time he joyously received his husband’s kiss with a smile.

They’d been separated for a few scant days, but devoured each other with passionate kisses like a pair of lovers who’d been kept apart for centuries. *That bastard Lutz took advantage of Kaie in this indecent condition!* His Uncle Matsuhira had better pay proper penance or

he'd have his head in a second! But as they exchanged deep kisses, Daina was relieved that at least in this department they were still sailing on an even keel.

“Daina, kisses aren’t enough. Here, too—” Kaie boldly took Daina’s hand and placed it between his legs. “Hurry up and touch me in all the places that bastard touched me. You idiot—”

“You certainly are saying some risqué things, Kaie—” Daina smiled happily and kissed the base of Kaie’s neck.

“Leave all the hickies you want. We’ll do it over and over, until the day breaks, until the very last moment when you turn back into a kid.”

“Then I’m free to do whatever pleases me?”

“All’s fair, so hurry up and touch me.” He was already hard where Daina’s hand pressed firmly against his groin. Up till now this was the first time Daina had seen Kaie so randy, so aggressive. He was so cute, coming onto him like this. A real turn-on.

We’re going to hump our brains out until we’re numb all over.

Sending shivers through his body, Daina raised Kaie’s hips and buried his face between the tawny-haired demon’s thighs. “You’re missing a hole—!” he said in amazement, fixing his gaze upon Kaie’s nether regions. “One of your holes went missing! Kaie, what happened to it?” he cried out, hoisting Kaie’s legs onto his shoulders. Freeing his hands to part the body hair, Daina raised the excited, swollen package and examined what lay beneath.

“Ah! Ah!” Responding to the delicate movements

of his fingers, in the blink of eye Kaie's fountain spouted forth two more times.

"Nowhere to be seen. Not even a trace. Does this mean you've become a man, Kaie?" Daina traced the smooth place between the base of Kaie's member and his bottom. He glanced up at Kaie's face.

"When—when—you touch me there, it feels strange somehow—" His hips undulated and he looked back at Daina with moist eyes. Pleasure being Kaie's top priority, the question never registered.

"You've become a man, yet your nymphomania has not abated?"

"Enough with the chit-chat! Quit wasting time and lick me the way you always do."

Daina couldn't believe his ears. *What did Kaie say to me just now?* If his hearing was not mistaken, he said to lick him the way he always did. Daina gulped and asked, "Just lick?" If his hearing had been mistaken, he could expect a smack or punch from Kaie's hand in return.

"Yes—no—not only that. Here too—"

Kaie clumsily undid the buttons of his pajama top, exposing his chest and showing to Daina his rosy and erect buds.

Praise be to my honored ancestors! Daina crowed to himself. *I'm the happiest man alive!* Right now there wasn't an angel in the entire universe any happier than he! Enormously aroused, his heart and loins burned with an equally bright flame. From this point onward they were going to keep at it just the way they were right now, for how many days it took. Was any

position beyond their grasp? No! He was the Celestial King! There was nothing he couldn't do! The original love machine!

Hearing such demands from Kaie for the first time had suddenly left Daina in something of a swoon.

“Hurry up, Daina—”

Perhaps incapable of staving off the inevitable any longer, Kaie began to pleasure himself right in front of Daina’s disbelieving eyes. To ensure this wasn’t a dream, Daina gave his own cheek a vigorous pinch. It really hurt. *Yep, this is reality!* And he never thought he’d live to see Kaie pleasuring himself by his own hands!

As Kaie masturbated, showing himself off as if on purpose, Daina trailed his fingers along his skin, circling from his flanks to his buttocks. Kaie raised his voice in a sweet groan.

“You’re gonna get yourself off just like that?”

Daina didn’t want to discomfort Kaie by penetrating him out of the blue, so first he inserted the middle finger of his right hand after wetting it with his saliva.

“Ah—”

The foreign object pressing inside Kaie made him tense up for a second, but then came a husky, alluring cry.

“Does that feel good? If it does, then say so.” For whatever reason, gazing down on the moaning Kaie brought out the dirty old man in Daina.

“It feels good—”

“That’s a good boy.”

“But your finger isn’t enough!”

Daina almost got a nose bleed right then and there. Hadn’t they only moved on after he’d gotten used to the finger? Was this really okay by him? Should he go ahead and mount him? *All right! I understand!*

Daina withdrew his finger, unzipped his fly and took out his splendid organ. *We’ll start in the missionary position. The basics, keep to the basics.* Placing his hands behind Kaie’s knees, he folded his legs back and then penetrated him with a single, decisive thrust.

With a loud groan, Kaie took his hands from groin and wrapped his arms around Daina’s back. “Too harsh?”

“I’m fine.”

Kaie laughed awkwardly, his head swaying back and forth, exciting Daina all the more. Usually Kaie would either yell at him, “Hey, that hurts! Idiot Daina! Do it more gentle-like!” or would cry up a storm until the sensation improved.

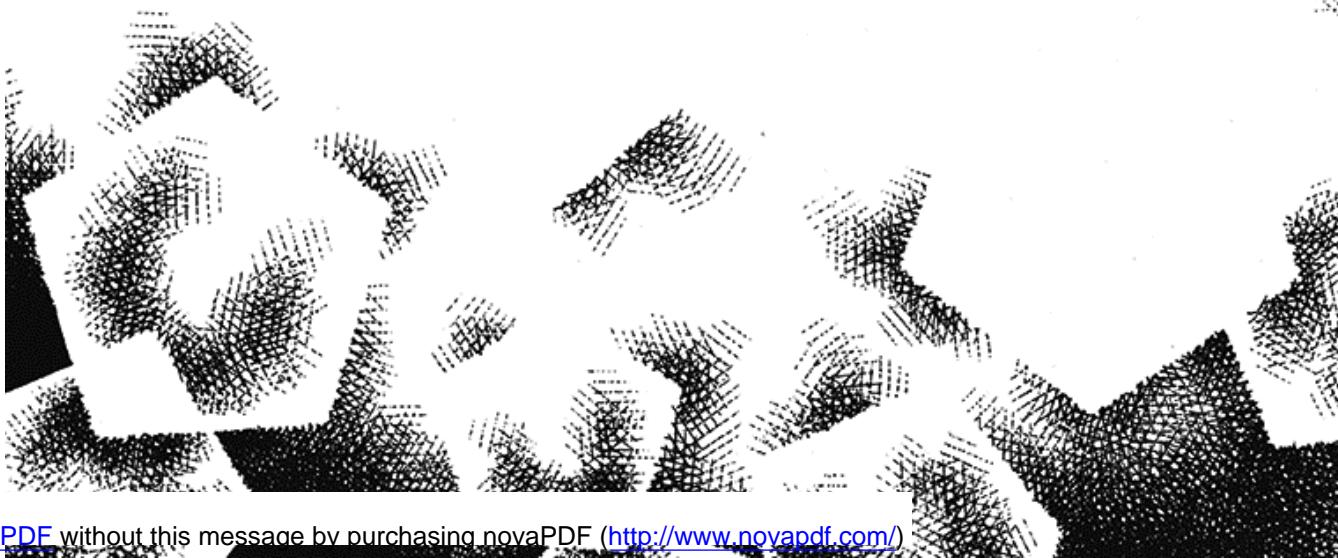
It was only natural that Daina was aroused.

“Do it quicker—Daina—more—”

Assenting to Kaie’s continued pleas, Daina nodded and thrust forward with great enthusiasm. Gasping out cries intermittently, Kaie’s hips rose and fell in concert with Daina’s thrusts.

“Daina—I’m coming—I’m coming—” As the center of his body pressed upwards towards that point of maximum pleasure, Kaie’s eyes brimmed over.

“Come as often as you want. I’m going to ravish you until you faint from pleasure.” Daina spoke with a touch of that dirty old man chic, a magnificent smile on



his face that made Kaie fall in love with him all over again.

His thoughts drifted hither and yon, and his body felt as light as a feather and as fresh as the new-born day. Had he jacked off enough to get this much satisfaction? No, that wasn't it! Last night, all of a sudden Lutz had showed up and was all over him like a wet blanket—

“Ah! Where'd that dirty bastard Lutz go? How dare he lay a hand on another man's wife! Who the hell does he think he is?” Kaie leapt vigorously to his feet on the bed. But his legs gave way and with a loud shout he tumbled to the floor.

“Who's making so much noise this early in the morning?”

“Eh?” Kaie turned back towards the bed apprehensively. He had to see for himself whether the voice of an angel who shouldn't be there was really there, or whether he was hearing things.

“So, how's your bottom feel?”

“D-Daina!”

Sitting up on the bed, his husband Daina stretched with a big yawn. But since it wasn't nighttime, he was the size of a fifth or sixth grader.

“I—last night—with Daina—?” His face flushed red, those were the only words Kaie could get out of his mouth.

He nodded. “Hey, we did it so many times I lost count. I think I blew a gasket somewhere along the way. Sorry about leaving you senseless like that, Kaie. The way you kept coming on to me I just couldn't hold back

any longer.” And then, as if a thought had just occurred to him, he flashed a clever grin.

“Sitting there like that and giving me a dirty look like that, does that mean you know how many times? And what about Lutz? You’re not telling me you killed him—?”

“He was going to have his way with you, and touch you in the places only *I’m* allowed to touch you—”

“Whoa!” Kaie shouted. “That’s *way* too much information first thing in the morning!”

Kaie’s reaction in mind, Daina amended and revised his remarks. “Lutz has been banished from the Three Realms. The King of Hades and the Spiritual Administrative District Chief were happy to sign the writ. To tell the truth, I really wanted to take his head off. But although he’s a liar and a scoundrel, he’s still Uncle Matsuhira’s son. So in deference to my uncle, I let him live.”

“I see. But if you and Lutz switched places on top of me sometime last night, I sure don’t remember it.” Kaie combed both hands through his sandy hair and laughed.

“Don’t spout such nonsense, Kaie,” Daina said, sitting cross-legged on the bed. “Lutz only copped a feel or two. Everything that came later was my doing. Even you were saying stuff like, ‘I can’t hold back, Daina’ and ‘Don’t do me only with your finger,’ and crying out my name the whole time.”

Kaie eyed Daina suspiciously in silence. About five minutes later his face flushed all the way down to his neck and he bowed his head.

“Did you remember?”

Kaie silently nodded his head. *Why would I—would I do such wild and reprehensible and unseemly and outrageous things? And say them?* But judging by the look on Daina’s face, the black-haired angel didn’t seem to be pulling his leg—

“Kaie.”

“Huh?”

“You didn’t do anything to be ashamed about. We’re a couple, are we not? It’s only natural that a wife should desire her husband.”

“Daina—you—” Kaie was moved by his words.

“At any rate, take a bath. I’m practically sticking to the sheets.”

“Whoa, Nellie—!” Kaie finally realized that he was standing there stark naked. “Look at all the hickies! I look like I’ve come down with some kind of contagious disease!”

“Don’t be obnoxious. You demanded I cover you head to toe.”

“Okay, I get it. I get it. You don’t need to say any more,” Kaie grumbled under his breath as he slowly came to his feet.

The tiny Daina immediately rushed to his side to help him up. “Let’s have a morning bath together.”

“Hey—”

Daina circled his arm around Kaie’s bare waist to offer him support. That alone was more than Kaie could tolerate. But if the only thing Daina lacked in this form was a full set of equipment, that didn’t rule out an

oral or tactile approach. But it was still a total turn-off, in any case.

“Kaie, you’re standing at attention.”

“T-that’s what normally happens to men in morning!”

“Don’t hide such things from me now. I told you before, didn’t I? Considering the things we’ve done together, you don’t have anything to worry about.”

“But I—”

“I’m telling you that it’s okay, so don’t be so stubborn.”

The diminutive hand stroking him between the legs felt pretty good, and all Kaie could do was nod in assent.

Chapter 31

After sitting the feverish Kaie down on a chair in the living room and taking a long draw from a bottle of mineral water, Daina headed to the bedroom to change the sheets.

“For being stuck in a kid’s body—” Kaie said, pressing the water bottle against his cheek.

As things had turned out, Daina had gotten him off two more times in the bathroom. Opening his thighs wide and sitting on the edge of the bathtub allowed Daina, with his delicate tongue and fingers, to bring him to a state of arousal powerful enough to move him to tears. Recalling those moments, Kaie breathed a deep and wistful sigh.

Despite his size, Daina rode him like a bucking bronco. Knowing Kaie’s body the way he did, Daina attacked him at his most vulnerable points. He’d be in trouble if Daina made a habit of it. *But since this is an emergency situation, I’ll just have to deal.*

Needless to say, after he became a complete man and was cured of his nymphomania, this type of behavior could get pretty high-risk. “If I keep shooting off like a fire hose I’m gonna drain myself dry and croak mid-coitus before I ever get to the next stage.”

Yet recalling how Daina buried his face in the center of his thighs and lapped him up, he slipped his right hand beneath his bathrobe and repeatedly stroked his groin.

“With my metabolism running on hyperdrive, I can never spend myself completely. I can keep coming like that and yet I’m still ready to come some more.”

Holding the stained sheets in his arms, Daina grinned as he spotted Kaie plunging his hand inside his bathrobe.

“Hey! I can’t help it! I can’t stop wanting to get it on with you!”

“I hope to hear you say that again once this fever passes.”

“You idiot. Get over here.”

Still seated in the chair, Kaie undid the bathrobe and slid his body forward, opening his legs wide, flashing Daina his rising erection. Daina dropped the sheets on the floor and knelt in front Kaie and said, “Daina is going to do whatever Daina feels like doing.”

Kaie planted his hands on the chair behind him to prop himself up and said, “Make me come.” *Unbelievable! What a freaking slut I am!* A slut, maybe... but he didn’t have the slightest desire to be touched by anybody but Daina. Feeling Daina’s hot breath on his thighs, he decided: *If I’m only a slut around Daina then that’s okay, isn’t it?*

“You got me all hot and heavy just a few minutes ago, so I’m probably going to come right away.”

“I told you, leave everything up to me.”

“You really don’t love me, do you? You only want me for my body.”

“If I only wanted you for your body, I would have settled for a body attached to a head that actually paid attention to what I said.”

“So you’re saying I don’t toe the line and I act out and I have bad manners.”

“Who’s complaining? I love your rebellious side and your hunky, hard-ass side and your funny hair side and every side about you.”

“R-really?”

“Really,” Daina said, glancing up at him. “And now that you know, let’s hear nothing but sweet nothings from you.”

And when Daina observed on Kaie’s face a look of pleased resignation, he lowered his head and continued where he left off.

Chapter 32

White clouds and blue sky as far as the eye could see. Daina and Kaie sprawled on the beach looking out towards the infinitive horizon of the almost-transparent ocean.

“I should be getting a pretty good tan, hmm?”

“Take away the towel around your waist and you’d bake yourself nice and even, no blotches.”

Sitting in the shade of a beach umbrella, Daina sipped at a beer and laughed through his nose. Looking like a kid and drinking a beer gave off weird vibes, like he was some sort of alien creature.

“Tanning the parts of my body where the sun don’t normally shine doesn’t do much for me.”

“You don’t say—”

A pleasant breeze brushing their cheeks, the two of them enjoyed the resort atmosphere in silence.

“Oh, yeah, what was with that rush job you had in Heaven?” Kaie inquired, crawling over the cooler and extracting a can of beer.

“Yes, indeed. My idiot father was in the computer room and managed to wipe out all the weather and climate data for Heaven and stuck me with the whole mess. It was my love for you that pushed me to finish the job faster than expected.”

“And this business with Lutz—”

At the mention of his name, Daina put on a

clearly disagreeable face. “Let’s not mention his name,” he said, pursing his lips.

“Seems the bastard found out about this place from your father. He gave me this line about his uncle asking him to provide me with some friendly company.”

“Come again?”

“That’s why, when we get back to Heaven, I’ve been thinking of giving my father-in-law a piece of my mind. I mean, sending a scum-sucking lowlife like that to keep me company is pretty messed up.”

Kaie savored his beer, but Daina crumpled his empty can. “So the culprit in all this turns out to be my stupid old man! Son of a bitch! Why can’t he just sit back in his imperial mansion and enjoy his retirement?!”

“Daina! I understand why you hate him, but you’re not seriously thinking of doing in your own father? This isn’t the same thing as offing your step-siblings or stepmothers, is it? You shouldn’t do anything to disgrace your own name.”

“Kaie. We’ve been married twenty years and you certainly have taken on all the attributes of a queen.”

“I suppose. Too bad I’m a male queen though. But for the time being at least Yuuri’s teachings seem to be sinking in.” Kaie smiled awkwardly and planted a kiss on Daina’s cheek.

“You’d better be careful, Kaie. I may be getting intoxicated by your pheromones.”

Kaie furrowed his brows at the serious look that suddenly came across Daina’s face.

“I have the urge right now to push you down on

the sand and have my way with you.”

“And getting sand inside certain places? *Eww*, forget it.”

“Either way, I still want to.”

“I said, no way. If you want to that bad we’ll do it after we get back to the villa.”

“It’d mean something special doing it here. What do you say we both jerk off beneath this bottomless blue sky?” When Kaie didn’t answer, Daina turned to him. “Say something, Kaie.”

“Daina, you don’t seem to get how crude that sounds coming from you right now,” said Kaie, pulling a face and glaring at him.

“Whatever,” he replied, with a perfectly straight face. “As a man—or rather, as an angel—I say whatever comes naturally to me.”

A moment of silence passed between the two of them.

“What is it that makes all these weird angels want to come onto me, anyway?” Kaie wondered, a forlorn expression on his face. He sighed and hugged Daina’s small frame.

Chapter 33

About a week had passed since their days of eating, sleeping, and constant sex. One evening, Mayu, the lady doctor from Hades, dropped in on Daina and Kaie at their love nest. But as Daina left the room to take a call on his supernatural realms phone, she only spoke with Kaie.

“So how goes it, Kaie-chan? Still randy to do it anytime and anywhere? Are the symptoms gone for good?”

“Oh, hey! Yesterday, right in broad daylight, Daina starts getting all cozy between my thighs and all I feel is irritated. So, yup. Gone for good.”

They were in the bedroom. According to protocol Daina had been dispatched to the living room.

“Well, we’ll check your chromosomes, and then you get undressed and lie down on the bed. Raise those hips nice and high. I’m going to have a feel around.”

“Eh?”

“For this doctor, feeling is believing. But first open wide and say ‘Ah.’ This will check your demon genome. Just runs along the tip of your tongue. Doesn’t hurt and it’ll be over in a second. It’s a very precise and very portable gene sequencer. There’s nothing like it in the human world.” Mayu put on a white lab coat and took an instrument from her medical bag.

“I wasn’t talking about that, Mayu-chan.

Undress?"

"Only from the waist down. All right, after me, ah—"

Kaie opened his mouth thinking frantically to himself, *Getting touched by anybody but Daina*—

"According to your chromosomes you're a strapping young man. Now, pants off, on the bed, and on your back."

"If my chromosomes say I'm a man, what do I need an examination for?" he whined, pulling off his jeans.

"Kaie-chan, in a small percentage of the hermaphroditic demons who turn into men, a small opening is left behind. If not operated on and closed it can cause problems. The cause is still something of a mystery, but if burdened with a weak constitution you could not carry out your duties as queen."

Learning about this worst-case scenario had Kaie sweating buckets. He quickly pulled off his jeans and undershorts together.

Chapter 34

“Congratulations, Your Royal Highness. Kaie-chan has turned into a splendid specimen of a man.”

“And so I would have expected.” Though to tell the truth, Daina looked a long way from overjoyed at the news.

“If anything comes up again, call me anytime. I will fly right over. Literally. Take care, all. All the best to you, Kaie-chan!”

“Hey, Mayu-chan! Hurry up and find yourself a nice guy!” Even after Mayu had vanished, he continued to wave at the place she had been.

“So after this we’ll only get up close and personal at night?” Daina let out a long, painful sigh.

“Of course. Once a week and only at night. That should be enough, shouldn’t it?”

“Hardly.”

“Just the other day we were doing it like crazy, morning, noon and night! That wasn’t a sufficient return on your investment?”

“Talking about getting a return on my investment, that’s pretty cold. You don’t really love me.” Daina sat himself down in a chair, his long arms and legs flopping down like useless appendages.

“Again with this irritating nonsense. So we’re not having sex right and left anymore, but I’m still your wife and I—well—ah— What I’m trying to say is...I love you!”

“Really.”

“You think I’m lying about something like this? Idiot Daina. You’d better get back to Heaven. Suehiro and Yuuri are waiting. You can’t be absent from Heaven indefinitely, can you?” Kaie took the face of the oddly sulking Daina in his hands and smiled wryly. “Don’t pout. Your pretty face might freeze like that, you know.”

His cheeks reddening a bit, Kaie pressed his lips against Daina’s. As they opened their mouths together and entwined their tongues, Daina couldn’t help but muse to himself. *This guy Kaie has gotten adept at handling me recently. He’s figured out how to brighten my mood. What an absolute treat he is.*

After a short while their lips parted. “You feeling better?” Kaie asked.

“More or less. Well, back to Heaven. Shall we transport ourselves there? Or fly the first leg?”

“Whatever suits your fancy.”

Daina glanced out the window. “A beautiful crescent moon is rising, so let’s take in the New Moon while on the wing.”

And here Kaie once thought that all Daina could think about at night was sex. He smiled ruefully to himself. “For some reason or another, I really love you right now too.”

“Only right now?” asked Daina, drawing his brows together.

Kaie shook his head back and forth. “You misunderstand. I love you more now than I ever did before.”

Daina smiled broadly and happily in response to Kaie’s words.

Chapter 35

It was the middle of the night, yet the Imperial Palace was bustling in anticipation of the return of the Celestial King and Queen.

“Kaie-sama, congratulations!”

“You’ve become a man!”

“It really suits you!”

The servants served Kaie a cake they’d made for him.

Having watched the store during their absence, with tears in his eyes and heartfelt emotion in his voice, Suehiro said, “After this you’ll literally be Daina-sama’s right-hand man.” He kissed the back of Kaie’s hand. As he had promised, the incident at the villa was locked away in the vault of his heart.

Yuuri alone stood apart from the crowd, observing Kaie with a stern look on his face. “Did you review like I asked you to?”

Kaie stalled.

“Kaie-sama.”

“Sorry. Actually, in all the commotion I probably forgot a bunch of stuff.” Kaie scratched at his scalp. “My bad,” he said, flashing Yuuri a smile.

Yuuri heaved a heavy sigh. “Is that so? I’m not surprised. Starting tomorrow, we’ll start you on a special new curriculum.”

“A special curriculum? Why me?”

“As Suehiro has pointed out, having become a genuine man, Kaie-sama will now become Daina’s right-hand man. That means learning the particulars of political negotiation. And that means learning how to use the computer system of the Imperial Palace.”

“What are you talking about?” As a servant served him a piece of cake on a plate, Kaie slumped to the floor.

“Because only members of the Royal Family have access to the computer system, I would hope that Daina-sama would see to Kaie-sama’s education in this regard. Do you not agree, Daina-sama?”

“Huh? Oh, fine with me.”

“Well, then, I shall make the necessary adjustments to Daina-sama’s schedule. And on that note—” With a last grin at Kaie, Yuuri all but skipped out of the drawing room.

“Why do I have to learn *more* things? My brain’s ready to pop like a balloon!” Kaie pursed his lips and glared at Daina.

“Leave everything to me. I’ll take you by the hand and teach you everything you need to know,” Daina replied confidently, taking a second serving of cake from a servant.

“You’ve got quite a challenge ahead of you, Kaie-sama.”

“Do I have to hear it from you, too, Suehiro?” Kaie had pretty much lost his appetite for the cake he’d been waiting for this whole time.

Chapter 36

While getting into bed, Kaie and Daina amicably planned out their activities for the next and upcoming days.

“Tomorrow morning I’m going to my old man’s place. How about you?”

“I’m definitely coming along. I have a few complaints of my own to voice about Lutz.”

“Indeed. This time around there’s something I’m thinking of taking off his hands.”

“What? From the look on your face, you’ve got something up your sleeve.” Kaie pinched Daina’s nose.

“You like horses?” Daina asked in return.

“Horses? You know, when I was on Earth I went to the races all the time.”

“Hmm,” was all Daina said.

“What’s with that look? What is it you’re not telling me?”

“The truth is, there are horse races in Heaven as well. Though here they race pegasi.”

Kaie’s eyes went round with surprise. “You’re kidding me! I’ve been living here for twenty years and this is the first time I’ve heard of horse races!” He jumped up wailing, “I can’t believe you hid this from me! That’s just mean!”

“I kept silent in deference to Yuuri. He considers such amusements a distraction from learning. Since the races are held only once every century, it was only

natural to keep you in the dark.”

“Yuuri again, huh. What did I ever do to get on his bad side?”

“It’s because Yuuri is a perfectionist. Still, he’s awfully easy on you, isn’t he?”

“He is?”

“Sure he is. At any rate. Tomorrow I’ll tear my old man a new one and walk out with the winning horse from the previous tournament. Should be fun.”

“Is this horse good for nothing but racing? What about riding?”

“Pleasure riding is certainly an option, but the training of a racehorse takes top priority.”

“Fine with me. I’d like to go riding now and then.” Kaie returned to the middle of the bed. “A pegasus, huh. I bet it’s beautiful.”

“It is. But a horse is a horse. As far as I’m concerned, your black wings are the most beautiful things in the world.” Daina loved Kaie’s shimmering, lustrous bat wings and their wonderful, velvet-like texture.

Kaie blushed. “I think your big, white wings are the most beautiful things in the world,” he said, settling back down against Daina’s chest.

“Because our parents are so much alike, it’s only natural that we should appreciate the beauty of each other’s wings.” Daina hugged Kaie’s very huggable body and kissed his sandy hair.

“Even so, I’ve still got my studies. I’ll give it my best shot. Being called stuff like the Celestial Queen is a real bother.”

“Don’t pay attention to what other people say,” he said while thinking, *Kaie is still so cute! I’m definitely never letting him go!* Holding Kaie in his arms, Kaie’s back against his chest, Daina planted another lustful kiss on Kaie’s hair.

“Still, if I really work hard and learn everything I’m supposed to, that means we’ll have more time to be together.”

“That would be the case.”

“And since we’ll only be having sex once a week, I’ll even be able to hang out with you at work.”

“You really mean that? Only once a week?” Daina said, a bit taken aback.

“Of course. You know what a strain it puts on my body, don’t you? How about we try it the other way around and I mount you?”

“Don’t say scary things like that, Kaie. You climbing on top of me—”

“My bad. Look, I’m getting goosebumps too.” Kaie held help up his arm for Daina to see. “At least hold out until my studies are mostly resolved,” he exhorted him.

“And how long will that be?”

“Hard to say.”

“Good grief, the things I’ve got to put up with—” Daina buried his face in Kaie’s hair and sighed a long, deep sigh until it seemed his last breath had left his body.

Yes, education is important. That’s why there’s no giving ground on this one.

Kaie giggled and wrapped his arms around Daina’s body. “Sorry, Darling.”

Whatever became of their nighttime activities—and whether Daina ever again mounted a counterattack—is a secret all their own.

Afterword

Hello there. Matsuri Kouzuki here. Pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm delighted that you've read all the way to the end. After two serious dramas in a row, this time around I thought I'd give my brain cells a little R&R and write a comedy.

Not just a supernatural tale, but one about the Celestial and Demon realms. Okay, even I'd have to admit that there's nothing very unusual about *that*. But in my version the angels are the *seme* and Heaven is a pretty chancy place to boot.

Little Darling was first published in an original anthology collection. It pretty much remains the story I wanted to write about a child *seme* whose physical transformation, like Ultraman's, takes place in three minutes. As for the *uke*, making sure Kaie always represented a solidly male character despite being a hermaphrodite took a lot more revisions.

Unlike the material in the first version, I changed things around in the latter half of the part one to make the story easier to continue in the part two. But not a great deal. And in part two, *I'm Sorry, Darling*, Kaie finally becomes a complete man. That was great.

In this story, one of the supernatural beings sports the name "Crown Prince Taki Thunder." He was a character in a manga short story previously published by I's Books. I threw him in as a joke, so just give him a

smile and keep on going.

In part two I have the *seme* Daina utter a particularly coarse line (his use of “hole” twice in a row), but even though Daina is the *seme*, at least verbally I think of him as the funny man to Kaie’s straight man routine. Sorry about that. Even though I was taking the low road, I included these comedy duo routines and wrote the lines for my protagonists with the hope that, it being a comedy, the end results should turn out okay.

Credit for the name of Headmaster Yuuri, who appears in part two, goes to one of the *kiriban* (website hit count) winners on my home page. Kiriban winners are rewarded by having their names used in my novels. A dubious honor, perhaps, but one I am pleased to bestow.

And of course, I am always thankful to my illustrator, Naduki Koujima. It’s delightful being able to see both the child and adult versions of Daina. And Kaie sure is cute for a hunky tough-guy. Naturally, I’m the last person to run away from the sight of a well-built *uke*—

Well, then. I look forward to meeting you in my next volume. I’d be delighted if you’d drop by my “Paradise Castle” home page sometime and say hello:
<http://homepage1.nifty.com/kouzuki/>



edited by: JCB